

CATHOLIC
EMANCIPATION
REVIEWED A CENTURY AFTER

REV. TIMOTHY O'HERLIHY, C.M.

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REVIEWED A CENTURY AFTER

BY
REV. TIMOTHY O'HERLIHY, C.M.



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"L'impartialite de l'histoire n'est pas celle d'un miroir qui refilete seulement les objets, mais celle d'un juge qui voit, qui ecoute, et qui prononce."

—Lamartine.

FOREWORD

“Strange and devious are the paths of history. Broad shining channels get mysteriously silted up; many a time what seemed a glorious high-road proves no more than a mule-track or mere cul-de-sac.”—*Morley*.

HISTORY consists more in the drawing of proper conclusions and appreciations from documentary testimony than in the jostling of documents in a pastiche, no matter how well done, until the degree of certitude arising from the agglomerate altogether vanishes. Sober history must ever be expressed in its deductions as impressions from the data supplied. But how are the deductions derived? Very often from the plain reading of incidents or facts, but in the more difficult and intricate questions by a sense which is peculiarly that of the historian. A colligation of facts serves to prepare the conclusions but not to interpret them. With the best of goodwill, it is not easy at times to arrive at a convincing reconstruction of the evidence to hand, either because it is inadequate or because it has the confusion of contradiction in it: there are times too when the same confusion arises from a superabundance of testimony, and an embarrassing accumulation of documents.

The history of Catholic Emancipation and of the Veto question can bewilder only for this latter reason, and hence, because of the profusion

of literature connected with these subjects, nothing can be stated which has not been already noted. But, though noted and of a peculiarly tendentious nature, the conclusion to which they point has not been emphasised while a great deal of irrelevancy is construed towards a preconceived assumption very often the result of bias. For several reasons juster appreciations can be formed to-day, and side-lights have been cast here and there which tend to fasten judgments, without seeming to give to their treatment an apologetical bias.

Life, as a health-giving element, only begins when the struggle which has guaranteed its safety has ended. The past is studied now for the sake of the present that the continuity of the race in all its aspects, especially the cultural, may be fortified. If Ireland has had past glories, it may be assumed that others await her in the future, but they will be the fruits of the same striving, which was notoriously her part in the past, though in less trammelled circumstances. Hence the vital necessity that she should interpret herself aright, and place in a proper perspective the incidents, whether great or small, that redounded to her well-being.

At this distance from the events with which this work is concerned it is more easy to see the sequence of incidents and to trace the logic of facts, if not to perceive what Bossuet calls the divine intervention in the origin, progress, diffusion and duration of incidents.

INTRODUCTION

ONE hundred years have almost run since Catholic Emancipation was by law established. More than that time has elapsed since the great turmoil through which it laboured its success. These old strifes are no more ; they belong to the sphere of impartial history. During the intervening years, shadows have shortened, if not disappeared ; incidents stand out detached from the intrigues with which they were naturally connected : political bias is on the way to be eliminated, except where it is studiously maintained to assert a point of view not in harmony with the facts ; and motives can be apportioned with more accuracy than was heretofore possible. The dust of battle has cleared away, and the incumbrances with which the field was strewn have been carted off to a museum of antiquities, there to be classified and labelled according to their kind.

Historians and apologists there have been, in abundance, of the Union and of the points with which it is inseparably connected ; but, on the Irish side, no apology is needed when the plain story is told and when a clear vision is retained of the elements which go to make up the episodes. If the past deserves consideration, it ought to be the consideration of sympathetic understanding, and it is owed to the present to so disengage it that it may be an inspiration to

those who are the inheritors of the gains achieved by the strifes and endurances borne by their ancestors. Irish recollections of a bitter and unequal struggle will live in the popular mind as long as history is taught or as long as the land can produce worthy sons. But the time has come for dispassionately reviewing the events in the light of a century of experience all of which, no doubt, was not of a kind to shed either a light or a lustre on what needed clarity.

In taking the face value of things—a point which is so essential in traversing the facts of history—a reserve must be made when the statements and promises of politicians come up for judgment. Opportunism is the bane of political life: it has been elevated to the position of a principle by politicians and statesmen during the last few centuries. It is the art of statecraft, a symptom of political chicanery by which the common people are duped. From this it has resulted that a statesman's promise is rarely an index of his mind. Tallyrand, the master of this subtle art, would have it that words are only useful to conceal thought. Following it a little further it implies that rulers and their statesmen have no consciences in public affairs, and that they follow no code but expediency;¹ that promises may be made as a means of achieving an end, it being understood that they have no binding force and that honour is intangible in the circumstances. Whether it is Pitt or

¹ "Expediency is a sorry word, I say. Give me principle as my watchword."—*Lord Talbot*.

Castlereagh, we must not expect from them, notwithstanding promises solemnly given or, worse still, the duplicity of supposing them to be understood, anything more than what will accord with their political safety. This is the modern Machiavellianism, more subtle and more refined. There is no such thing nowadays as political sincerity, nor was there formerly, except in very rare circumstances and in men of fine moral fibre. The preparedness to stand or fall by one's word is relinquished, is superseded by the lust for power, the desire to cling to office and thus deceive most of the people for part of the time. The alliances of the Irish Party during the end of the last century and the early portion of the present represent in their fruition what the pledges of English political parties and statesmen stood for. It has been much the same since politics became a game between parties, and we must not on that account judge statesmen too harshly for unfulfilled promises. Few leaders, moreover, could afford to act independently of their parties, for, if they tried to do so, their careers would be cut short either by the intrigues of political bias or by religious prejudices.

Bitter experience has taught, or should have taught, Irishmen that they had little to expect from English politicians, and that there was but one means of achieving their ambitions, and that through liberation from the English parliament. The position of the Irish members at Westminster was humiliating for the Nation that

prided itself on self-respect ; they were scorned there and despised, and these sentiments were conveyed to them in no uncertain terms, while at other times a few crumbs were flung at them. The English government was at all times able to play off parties against one another in Ireland so that legislation and patronage would always be in favour of the loyal Protestant supporters. What was forced out of it by legislation was given in a most ungracious manner : it was so in the University scheme which was granted, but so trammelled with conditions that it could never realize Irish ideals ; so it was with that ill-starred Home Rule Bill which went as far as the Statute Book but was never applied. The rule of England in Ireland was that of monopoly for the few and contempt for the many, the exploitation of the Island for the select garrison and the forging of chains for the common people whose lot was thralldom.

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CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION

HISTORICAL RECAPITULATION

“The Irish believe that Ireland was theirs ; that the English were invading tyrants who had stolen their land, broken up their laws and habits, and proscribed their creed. The English believe that Ireland was a country attached, inseparably, by situation and circumstance to the English crown ; that they were compelled to govern a people who were unable or unwilling to govern themselves, and that the spoliation with which they were reproached has been forced upon them by the treachery and insubordination of the native owners.”

THUS is summed up by an English historian the fate of Ireland for almost seven centuries ; there too is to be found the source of almost all the miseries that have befallen the Irish nation. An aggressive stranger, breathing death and destruction, if he comes into a house and is determined to settle down there, cannot expect to be treated as a member of the family. This is not the usual order of dealing, especially when that stranger is an intruder, and is determined to take charge of things, to divide them up to his own advantage, and, when he meets with opposition, is prepared to retaliate savagely on

the lawful owners. When he complains of the opposition exhibited against him, and wonders that his presence is not naturally accepted as a blessing, he is aptly asked why he came or by what right he was present, and is requested politely to withdraw with the alternative, if he does not do so, that things are made difficult for him, even to the point of so harrassing him that he might be forced to leave. That is the parable of the Englishman in Ireland. Neither he nor his descendants have any reason to feel surprised that they are not wanted in this country; that, moreover, their occupying so much of the good land of Ireland is resented; that their accumulated misdeeds in famines, insurrections, and slaughterings are ever present in the public mind of the nation they outraged, neither by right nor title, but by savage coercion.

The right of conquest Ireland never admitted. Her protest was always there, forcibly expressed in rebellions and wars and treasons so called. And if at times she seemed to accept the English rule it was only ordinary opportunism to circumvent some difficulty created by England—Shane O'Neill and Hugh O'Donnell acted in this way in the days of Elizabeth, and considered themselves, in so doing, justified as honourable men. From time to time it is asserted that the Irish Chiefs did make their submission to England, even in large numbers, and, consequently, it is adduced that the Irish became willingly the subjects of England! Where treachery abounded in England's dealings and where a not too

scrupulous selection of means was made at times to circumvent the wily Irish, the sincerity of those submissions must not be assumed. The hide-and-go-seek policy that had to be adopted towards England was notorious because at this art England excelled—she out-machiavellied Machiavelli. When did England feel bound by any treaty, no matter how solemnly entered into? Her perfidy in breaking the Treaty of Limerick was not the only example that the Irish Chiefs might have appealed to. A more bewildering point ought to be clearly understood: English policy or the policy of the English cabinet was sometimes accepted inasmuch as it was milder or more acceptable than that of England's representatives in Ireland, who were actuated by local and Protestant bigotry. This was a mere dictate of common-sense, and is no more to be interpreted as an acceptance of English rule than is the giving over of your money to a burglar who has a gun at your head an act of deliberate willingness.

The Norman barons who came to the island first may have had a capacity for governing, but there is no right inherent in that power for the annexation of a country. In France the pure Norman was a source of power, and he did honour to the country. It might have been so in Ireland had his purity of race been preserved, but he came *via* England, and, his adaptability tending to blend with other races, it was a Norman-English strain that in the main reached Ireland, when its adaptability made it more Irish

than the Irish themselves, but in the course of time to be changed into the impure English strain for that race was more Saxon than English. The statute of Kilkenny, 1367, by which the English were to be a segregated race in Ireland, was the beginning of that privilege which was the undoing of the usurper who came with a forged Bull reinforced by a sacrilegious murder. English superiority, more or less of this type, "if you do not behave yourselves we will exterminate you," was not that which would appeal to the high-spirited Irish character. English law could not be made to run in the country, but a "Pale" was erected which was to be for a long time the fortified outworks of the English garrison; and a free hand was given all therein contained to treat the Irishman as an inferior being or a species of wild animal. Hence it was no felony to kill an Irishman; but, unless the odds were hard against him, he was able to take care of himself. The wild schemes of the members of the "Pale," when the dynasty in England was in jeopardy, were reflected in Ireland generally by visitations of severity and repressions. Lambert Simnel's coronation in Dublin was the signal for such a menace; and the imposition of Poyning's Law, by which the seat of *efficient* legislature is beyond the sea.

Putting aside the name *Dominus*, Henry VIII assumed the title King of Ireland. When no progress had been made in winning Ireland while a spiritual affinity existed between the two islands, it was not likely that it was to

succeed in the future when all the previous difficulties had tied on to them the odious one of a heretical religion. The best lands had been already seized and planted, the main artery of trade through the metropolis was occupied, things that were much resented; but from this time forward there is supervening an attempt to poison the spiritual system which was of the very atmosphere of Ireland, and so a state of affairs was inaugurated which could have left room for only one alternative, a fight to a finish. Severe were the fights and ruthless the plantations, but a holocaust of murders and plantations came with the arch-adventurer and highwayman, Cromwell. The curse of Cromwell! Well may it remain a bye-word of dark omen. The "Pale" was again the undoing of Ireland: the country was divided into four parties ultimately, but had the Irish taken their courage in both hands, ignored English divisions, kept their soldiers at home, there was left the means of getting rid of the foreigner, for a time at least. Divided counsels and divided interests brought the lash of Cromwell on monstrous inefficiency. The country has to pay for the blunder: The inhabitants are despoiled North, South, East and West: "to hell or Connaught" is the order, and for these acts of murder, massacre, and spoliation bitterness and disorder are piled up that will last for many a year. Self-protection is a dictate of nature, and therefore a fundamental law that can be asserted by forcible means. The dispossession of families in the

profusion in which it was done without regard for misery or humanity pointed to an utter contempt, on the part of the conquerors, for the elementary laws of life, and hence, through the desire of preserving her interests, England was prepared to subject the Irish to the same violence that she used against savages and aborigines in other parts of the globe where her conquests extended. Her policy was one of annihilation once she found that the conquered were prepared to resent tyranny, and never to forget it. It was somewhat of a surprise, and is such still, to the all-blustering Englishman that the people did not take these clearances from their lands mildly or in a sporting spirit, as if they were not death warrants for the old, the young, and the decrepit, as for the strong who were not prepared to leave the scenes of their ancestral homes but to die rather in defence of them. Here is the root of the racial antipathy which has prevailed so long: it is founded on the unnatural crime of extermination which treated a fairly cultured people—more cultured certainly than their conquerors—as wild animals in their own territory. They were made the sport of low adventurers who shot at them if they remained in the vicinity of their former possessions. Human baiting was legalised and encouraged, and availed of by the alien ne'er-do-wells who sought an easy means to fortune in Ireland. The English “regarded Ireland as peopled with men of desperate fortunes, the scum of their nation that had come over with

the armies, or with bankrupts and cheats which had fled thither to defraud their creditors." And Spenser said: "The moste parte of such English are either unlearned, or men of some badd note for which they have forsaken England." Cromwell's blood-bath explains everything. With English hypocrisy he hangs two of his soldiers who kill a fowl belonging to an old woman in marching through Wicklow, but with Saxon ruthlessness he massacres men, women and children in cold blood. The foul and brutal acts of his soldiery have been perpetuated in their descendants, in the cruel and ravishing landlords that cumbered the lands and have left the slime of their accursed savagery mixed with self-righteousness written largely in the institutions that have survived. "The order to the Israelites was to root out the heathen, lest they should cause them to forsake the Lord their God."

"Behind the people lay the maddening recollections of the wars of Elizabeth, when their parents had been starved to death by thousands, when unresisting peasants, when women, when children, had been deliberately massacred, and when no quarter had been given to the prisoners. Before them lay the gloom and almost certain prospect of banishment from the land which remained to them, of the extirpation of the religion which was fast becoming the passion as well as the consolation of their lives, of the sentence of death directed against any priest who dared to pray beside the bed of death. To

the most sober and unimpassioned judgment, these fears were reasonable": so Lecky. Surely for them the horizon was dark and the outlook very unfavourable; that which makes strong-minded people desperate. Helter-skelter amidst all this the Irish are accused of being lazy to a criminal degree, slothful and slovenly, caring nothing for material progress, and resigned to inevitable fate, grumbling, and dependence on others. It is an accusation which was made as early as the Elizabethan days and even still persists. The race has survived in all its pristine strength, and that alone refutes a great deal of the charge, for, in those days described, one had to be very alert to merely find the means to live: had the native Irishman lacked quick-wittedness, he could never have survived. Moreover, the incentive was all the other way, for why should he work when he was to see himself despoiled of all his possessions in the ordinary order of events? The calumny hides underneath it, "why cumbreth he the ground?" if he does not work—a sufficient reason to give a title to the intruders who had come to till and develop God's fair earth which had lain fallow under the Irish wastrels! Titles to land cannot be built up on glib talk, though it has done fair service for some centuries in covering the Irishman with ribaldry and making him the butt of his own mischievous ways. But notwithstanding, "the Irish believed that Ireland was theirs; that the English were invading tyrants who had stolen their lands, broken up their laws and

habits and proscribed their creed." With nine-tenths of the land of Ireland in their keeping it is easy for the English occupiers to calumniate the Irish peasants. The latter were driven to the bogs and mountains, and there they had to eke out a miserable existence from the soil. And of that land some of it was sublet six times over so that the occupier had to provide the equivalent of six rents. Swift could say of the country that "her bowels and vitals were extracted," and that the tenant-class were worse than English beggars. "The cultivation (of the soil) fell exclusively to the Catholic peasantry, to wretched cottiers—themselves starving on potatoes—who in those above them saw nothing but a series of profligate extortioners, a reproach alike to the Protestant creed they professed and to the system of administration which they represented."

"The Irishman, who was at once a Celt and a Catholic, inherited a legacy of bitterness from the past which he was forbidden to forget." The confiscation of the monastic lands, and the general upheaval caused by the Reforming campaign threw another apple of discord into the already sufficiently charged atmosphere of Ireland. Never was the tyranny of a country shown in a more barbarous way than was that of England towards Ireland. The "Pale" was the headquarters of this deadly anti-religious hatred. There resided in state the despoilers of altars and shrines. In proportion as the people had been robbed of their lands, and deprived of

the means of a livelihood—in that proportion they clung to what helped them to endure trials, notwithstanding terrible agonies : their religion. But now their religion was proscribed by a band of foreign adventurers, and its ministers hunted down, banished or put to death. But death had no terrors for the sturdy race. When education, home or foreign, was proscribed, to the Continent they went for learning, and back as priests came a long line of confessors and martyrs to assuage a suffering and depressed people. The mountains and hillsides, the caves and the valleys gave shelter from tyranny to the outlawed priests and afforded retreats where the sacred mysteries were performed. There were now two Irelands vowed to a deadly duel, for no reconciliation can bridge over the affronted spiritual inspirations of the Irish, effected by the pillagers of sacred places and the murderers of priests. In the political order, history records utter exhaustion at times, notably after the Restoration, and the Siege of Limerick ; but such exhaustion never existed in the religious sphere—the conquest of Elizabethan and Cromwellian settlers was effected, as Lecky says, “ by the invincible Catholicism of the Irish women.” To counteract these conversions, the Protestants were forced to become a caste with all the taboos and trumperies of a primitive people. There was a stern necessity of holding aloof from contamination and upholding the superiority of usurpers whose rights to property could never be sustained unless by the high-handed audacity that belongs to rapine.

“Protestant Ireland,” said Grattan, “knelt to England on the necks of her countrymen.” And it was a commonplace of English law that no such person existed as an Irish Roman Catholic. The Penal Laws enacted against the Catholics by England were such as would put to shame the decrees of the greatest tyrants—Huns, ancient or modern—for they were not the result of impetuosity but studied instruments of relentless torture to break the will of a nation; they were drafted to insult the better feeling of man, to outrage his religion in a most malignant way, and ultimately to exterminate either the race or the religion or both. The country was overrun with spies until the danger of betrayal became so great that a state of panic existed amongst the peasants, and it best describes the habitual condition of the people. “There is no instance even in the ten persecutions,” says Dr. Johnson, “of such severity as that which the Protestants of Ireland have exercised against the Catholics.”

It does appear ludicrous, in the light of the small amount of religion that existed in the Reformation movement—the revenge of a much-married sexual maniac, Henry VIII—and the paltry amount of observance which it carries in a Protestant conscience, to assume that a serious religious movement was at the back of all this Penal Code on the part of England, and that the Irish were so persecuted for the sake of the pure Gospel! A much more materialistic viewpoint was the guiding force in this sordid matter.

Security for the plundered lands was the inspiring motive of the campaign of heavily charged violence, and the hope that the consolidation of robbery might be achieved through the lofty motive of religion. It was the counterpart of the fire and sword of Mohammed: it was the attempt to acquire a good title, by slaying the enemies of the Lord, to the millions of broad acres that required protection. Cromwellians and Williamites knew that the Irish had long memories and that the slur of robbery would for ever be associated with them; hence matters were best put on a higher—but not holier—plane by invoking the Old Testament principle: exterminate the idolatrous nation and confiscate their lands. The plunderers, of course, forgot that they were not the people of God. “The Irish Catholics to a man esteem all Protestants as usurpers of their estates. To this day they settle those estates on the marriage of their sons and daughters. They have accurate maps of them. They have lately published in Dublin a map of this Kingdom cantoned out among the old proprietors. They abhor all Protestants and all Englishmen as plunderers and oppressors . . . The Protestants of Ireland are but the British garrison in an enemy’s country . . . English ministers are simply blind. I tell them that they are greatly deceived if they have been induced to believe that an Irish Catholic is, ever was, or ever will be a loyal subject of a British Protestant King or a Protestant government.” These words expressed by Duignan in the Irish

Parliament aptly expressed the sense of the nation and interpret the Protestant mind. Fitzgibbon, afterwards Lord Clare, said : " From the first moment that the Act of Supremacy was promulgated in this country the habitual aversion of the natives to the English nation became savage and inveterate antipathy. . . . The Papists lived continually in hope of aid from the Catholic Powers to root out the Protestants and shake off the yoke of Britain." On the other hand, England laboured under no delusions about the attitude of the Irish. William III at the battle of the Boyne tells his French regiment of Protestants : " Messieurs, vos persecuteurs sont devant vous " ; and on the evening of Dettingen George II is said to have cried out : " God curse the laws that made these men (the Irish soldiers) my enemies."

The motley crew of adventurers that surrounded the Prince of Orange in Ireland, Danes, French Huguenots, Scotch, Dutch, Brandenburgers, English and Anglo-English, remind one of the vultures that scent carrion from afar and hasten to make sure of a meal. The tenacity of the Celt was the one thing not counted on, tenacity in fostering his idea of nationhood with the hope that one day a new era would dawn. Over protracted centuries the dream did not die out, and it was handed down from father to son as a precious heritage. Arthur Young in 1774 writes : " it is a fact that in most parts of the Kingdom the descendants of the old land-owners regularly transmit by testamentary deed

the memorial of their right to those estates which once belonged to their families." Tenacity in the ancestral worship : adhering to the same spot as far as possible as witnessed their family history ; tenacity in religion which was a segregating principle and which hedged them around with a sense of security in the darkest hours—in these find the conservative atavism of the race. Whether it is Benburb or the Boyne, Aughrim or Athlone, Londonderry or Limerick, they were all episodes in the life of the race that made a long chain of suffering, but still rare acts of heroism which connote the strong vitality of the nation in its struggle for independence. But the mad series of gambles at the end of the eighteenth century, forced by a fainéant and imbecile king, together with intriguing ministers, showed that England was incapable of ruling or understanding Ireland. "The dagger was planted in Ireland's heart," as Grattan said ; the firebrand was thrown from hell in 1798, it was the final act in Ireland's education regarding England.

* * * * *

Was there a moral question involved in these relations between England and Ireland ? If there was, England did not think much about it : she knew of no obligation but persecute, persecute, persecute and—exterminate ; she also knew how to put as pensioners on the Irish establishment all the kings' mistresses and bastards and pawns whom she dare not put to the charge of her own country, until the pension list grew into an exorbitant total. Was there,

notwithstanding, on the part of Ireland, an obligation of submission to lawful authority? England was never in the position of exercising lawful authority: she began with an illegal usurpation which was resisted down through the centuries. It was well known and assumed as a principle by England that "the Papists lived continually in the hope of aid from the Catholic Powers to root out the Protestants and shake off the yoke of Britain." Sometimes Irish Chiefs submitted under duress, but they knew the treachery of their foe and they availed themselves of the recognised principle that "all is fair in love and war"—not that that can be interpreted as a moral standard, but it is the accepted usage amongst belligerents, highly consecrated in the late Great War. At times, long periods of relative quietude passed by, but they were only the necessary pauses for replenishing strength for the next attack, and the presence of a garrison in the country is the best proof that England was never deceived into thinking that the day of contentment or acquiescence in the just sovereignty of her rule had set in. The departure of the Wild Geese and the continued recruiting for armies on the Continent were the continued prelude to the hope that the day would come when a foreign army would effect Independence. The Irish principle was: *Nulla fides servanda cum hæreticis et spoliatoribus*. This principle has the advantage of being at once theological and national. The contamination which would result from the

acceptance of heretical rule would, by its attrition process of weakening, ultimately destroy the Catholic faith. So that in ultimate analysis in the sterner days of strife it was a battle for the Faith : "*leitius venit periculum, cum contentonitur.*"

A state that is essentially tyrannical against natural and divine rights admits neither the rights of individuals nor those of the community and hence loses the primary objects of a state. Such an institution has neither a legal nor a constitutional basis to command, and the people are justified in revolt. Lord Clare had said that a sincere Irish Catholic could never be voluntarily loyal to a Protestant sovereign.

Moreover, there was never a mutual understanding on which a secure pact of peace could be supported ; there might have been after the Siege of Limerick, for honours were divided, but Protestantism blocked the way. There were theories of methods of agitation, now constitutional, now based on physical force, sometimes partaking of one and the other, but they gave no guarantee that when the opportune moment arrived for striking the blow the blow would not be struck. With Tone it might be said : " Would that we spoke more laconically and acted more emphatically." On the declaration of a Lord Chancellor such a thing as an Irish Catholic did not exist before the law. The native Irish were treated as outlaws or, even worse, as wild animals ; their children were kidnapped to be brought up Protestants ; inducements were held

out to pervert members of the family through the hope of getting all the property; it was to the advantage of any Protestant to find a flaw in the record by which a Catholic held his land—and legal flaws were easy to find in those days—for thereby the ownership passed to him. Those imported “men of desperate fortunes, the scum of their nation that had come over with the armies, the bankrupts and cheats which had fled thither to defraud their creditors,” those who in forfeiting self-respect lost all sense of right and wrong—these were the lords and masters who held the Irish as helots. Catholics had no reason to keep faith with England, for England never kept faith with them. Swift compared the Catholic to a lion chained and bound fast, with its teeth drawn and its claws pared to the quick. Remember Limerick! was ever the watchword, and its echo was as vivid during the nineteenth century as it had been previously. The sacred trust had been handed on from generation to generation; and how many of them would have gone to their reward happy had they seen the dawn of freedom! Ireland had always true sons who thought clearly, and were not clouded by imported make-belief. She fought with famine, she fought with oppression, and, if she wearied from time to time under the heavy yoke, new inspirations were cropping up to link the threads of history to the undying and unconquerable faith of the past. 1916 opened up the last grand cycle for the modern kerns and galloglasses. They greatly dared as Irish

soldiers, and, if they seemed to fail, they but kindled a fire of patriotism that glowed in the hearts of their countrymen until all realised that the day of resurrection was at hand, and that the wild dreams of their youth were echoed from glen to glen and down the mountain-side, calling them to the final rally, the emulation of the great deeds of their ancestors, for Faith and Fatherland. And so it came about. In the final dash for liberty deeds of heroism were accomplished that, when told in school book or by the fireside many years hence, will sound like the thrill of far-off saga where spirit and fiend engaged in deadly struggle—the spirit of the Irish nation conquering its hereditary enemy.

“They never fail who die

In a great cause : the block may soak their gore ;
Their heads may sodden in the sun, their limbs
Be strung to city gates and castle walls—
But still their spirit walks abroad. Though years
Elapse, and others share as dark a doom,
They but augment the deep and sweeping thoughts
Which overpower all others, and conduct
The world at last to Freedom.”—*Byron*.

PROTESTANTISM

PROTESTANTISM is by name and nature a protest, a rejection of what was until its time the accepted religion of the world. It is a revolt against authority, against the Catholic religion,

and Catholic life. The fire of hatred against Catholics is habitually in Protestantism, it is its life, for it can scarcely be called a religion; it is the outward show of bigotry and prejudice. If its history is traced, it is not the religion of the Gospel which is founded on a body of truths that must be accepted as a condition of belonging to its belief, but it is rather a hatred of Catholicism, and, provided that is well done, there is room to think and do as one thinks fit. From the first moment of its existence it was fed on rapine and plunder so that it attracted to it all the malcontents and unprincipled have-nots of its age. So it was in Germany, as it was in England, where all the great houses and families have sprung from the plunder of altars and shrines. That is the history of its establishment and progress in Ireland, and that is the reason of the anti-national attitude of Protestants in this country, for Protestants know full well that if Catholicism would be even with them when it gained the upper hand it would deprive them of their ill-gotten plunder and set them adrift on the Irish sea to seek the land of their origin. If Protestantism does not kindle into a flame against Catholics in the Free State, as it does periodically in the Six Counties, it is not that it feels the less but it is more diplomatic, it is more amenable to reason, though it is nourished still on the inferiority of the Irish to whom the soil belonged just as it was in the days of the Plantations and after, when at any moment it expected a just

retribution for its robberies. A Protestant in Ireland cannot have an easy mind: he is the product of robbery and assassination, studiously carried out against the mere Irish that he might have the fat of the land through the suppression of them. If Protestants accept the official argument regarding the Rebellion of 1641, as well as the motive for Cromwellian and other plantations—that is, that all these were necessary for the security of the state: unrest, anarchy and assassination were promoted that the state might live!—then the counter-argument might in turn be used now that for the safety of a Catholic state it is incumbent on authority that all Protestants be expropriated, and that without compensation as the descendants of the Undertakers. The ill-gotten gains of the Protestants continuously endanger their position in the national life, and if the time perspective of history was kept alive by the reading of the history of the country during the past six centuries—the animosity and savagery that actuated the Protestant garrison, their contempt for justice in seizing the lands of the lawful owners, and their determination to retain them by stifling the Irish out of existence—the rulers should in equity feel that they had not done their duty until they had righted a great wrong. In their aloofness from the public life, in the position of privilege which they even still enjoy, in their want of sympathy with Irish ideals and the Irish language, they are stressing the alien blood that runs in their veins. Trinity

College remains still an ulcer in the heart of the nation, and, until means are devised for softening the bigotry which it disseminates, the old spirit of privilege and superiority will still survive.

The first Parliament which met after the Treaty of Limerick showed the tone of the Protestant party. It was violently hostile to the king and refused to ratify the Treaty, though it was beseeched to do so for the sake of the Protestant status, and as a matter of policy to avoid future trouble. Its members were determined not to be robbed of their prey, and to secure it the more they accumulated Penal Laws until in their human astuteness they concluded that they had secured the extinction of priests and Catholics in the country. Bishops and members of religious orders were expelled, priests educated on the Continent must not return, there must be no schools for clergy or laity, and the few old priests who remain must be registered, for on them is placed the hope of the rapid extinction of the priesthood. The Protestant neighbour may proffer at any moment five pounds for the best horse of his Catholic neighbour, he may so charge him that his lands would pass into his possession. It was all easily and skilfully arranged, not so much for their church but for their material welfare, that they might have all the good things of life, for, judging by the churchmen they had amongst them, religion did not matter much. Dean Swift did find it necessary to apologise for his ilk in Ireland. He said that the nominees to sees in Ireland

were waylaid in Hounslow Heath and their letters patent were stolen from them by highwaymen, who subsequently presented themselves for ordination in Dublin. This is only a subtle apology for the miscreants who filled the sees and benefices. Lecky says: "But many of the bishops were men who would never have been tolerated in England. . . . Many of these prelates, and those by no means the worst, almost dropped their ecclesiastical character, and were simply great noblemen, distinguished for their wealth and their conviviality." "A true Irish bishop," says Archbishop Bolton, "has nothing more to do than to eat, drink, grow fat and rich, and die." It is no wonder that some of their flock knew neither the number of the Commandments nor how many Gods there were. And all this time the Irish were tortured and starved and denied officially the ministrations of their religion! Even as late as 1802 the Protestant Primate protested against the appointment to a bishopric of one of whom he wrote: "Emolument is the only object of this young man, whose character is indisputably infamous."

IRELAND DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

I

DURING the eighteenth century the Catholics of Ireland were but a disorganised rabble without lands, laws, or rights of any kind. "The multi-

tude was pounded so to speak in a mortar at once by the sword, by famine and by the plague." They were in a much worse position than the ordinary serf of feudal times for, as is testified, they were nothing more than the live stock upon the estate of a landlord. Swift is explicit on the matter: "A stranger visiting Ireland would be apt to think himself travelling in Lapland or Ysland. . . . The miserable dress and diet, and dwelling of the people; . . . the families of farmers who pay great rents, living in filth and nastiness upon buttermilk and potatoes, without shoe or stocking to their feet, or a house so convenient as an English hog-sty to receive them. The rise of our rents is squeezed out of the very blood, and vitals, and clothes and dwellings of the tenants who live worse than English beggars." But withal they had a stimulating force in the consolations of their religion, though the opportunities of practising it were few, for the poor and the oppressed are honourably mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount. The law did not recognise Irish Catholics, except to inflict on them "a code which would have dishonoured the sanguinary pen of Draco. By these statutes, the exercise of religion had been held a crime, the education of children a high misdemeanour—the son was encouraged to betray his father—the child rewarded for the ruin of his parent—the house of God declared a public nuisance—the officiating pastor proclaimed an outlaw—the acquirement of property absolutely prohibited—the exercise

of trades restrained—plunder legalized in courts of law, and breach of trust rewarded in courts of equity—the Irish Catholic excluded from the possession of any office or occupation in the state, the law, the army, the navy, the municipal bodies, and the chartered corporations—and the mild doctrines of the Christian faith perverted, even in the pulpit, to the worst purposes of religious persecution.” The informer and the apostate ran riot over the country, and how execrably malicious were not the devices of espionage during that period as revealed by documents recently published? Catholics were at the mercy of blood-thirsty and degraded hirelings who, for a miserable sum, tracked them down. That men in high places could condescend to the hypocrisy of situation and circumstance to circumvent their fellow men in God’s service is appalling; that their tools would set up a veritable net-work for the detection of Catholics is understandable for they must have shared in the depravity of their masters. So tracked and hunted down, it is no wonder the iron of Ishmael entered their blood so that they thought themselves degraded and inferior beings. The inferiority complex is a surrender to the slave mind. Was there a contrast to be made between persecutor and persecuted, it is obvious that the former is more base than his victim. Psychologically the persecuted only reacts to the persecutor, while the latter has in him the depravity and degradation which his wiles signify.

“We were reckless, ignorant, improvident,

drunken, and idle," says Sir R. Kane. "We were idle, for we had nothing to do; we were reckless, for we had no hope; we were ignorant, for learning was denied us; we were improvident, for we had no future; we were drunken, for we sought to forget our misery." What catches the eye most in that is the misery and the hopelessness of outlook; two things that imply great strength of race, for otherwise how could it have escaped extermination. It would be strange if centuries of slavery had not done its work, and such slavery! Invasion, warfare without end, massacre and persecution: add it all up and the toils of our countrymen look ample in proportion. The country has not been one of sleep and idleness but a land where there has been a terrific struggle for existence which has exhausted all the sagacity of a quick-witted race.

Early in the eighteenth century, Bishop Berkeley asked: "Is there on the face of the earth any Christian and civilized people so destitute of everything as the mass of the people of Ireland?" Early in the nineteenth century another bishop, but a Catholic, Dr. Doyle, repeats the sad echo when he was asked what was the state of the people in the West of Ireland: "What it has always been. People are perishing as usual." The immediate cause of this condition of affairs was the heartlessness of the landlord. The Irish landlord was a selfish hireling possessing many vices, and rarely was any virtue to be found in the order. Some

lived abroad and bled their tenants and workmen through middlemen ; some remained in Ireland but to sow corruption and degradation broadcast. Like a pest, they infected the countryside and exhibited a cruelty and doggedness incompatible with a refined nature. The *Times* said of them : " The landlords increase their rights there with a hand of iron, and deny their duties with a brow of brass." Grattan put this in another way : " The poor were struck out of the protection of the law, the rich out of its penalties." One by no means friendly to Ireland, Froude, could not defend them, but wrote : " The Irish landlords in their dealings with the tenants have been little better than skilful thieves." Somebody else declared that he could contemplate the devil kneeling at God's footstool before he could envisage the landlord reformed. England's front line work in aggression and extermination was done by the landlord class. Their crushing power never ceased either in peace or in war. Before the Union, after the Union, and after Emancipation they were the same formidable body who despised their tenants and reduced them to most degrading servitude with a heartlessness and cruelty worthy of a Suraja Dowlah. Having, leech-like, sucked the very blood from the people in rents, they afterwards brutalized them, and went so far as to restrict their liberty so that they could not give a son or daughter in marriage without their consent. This was not general as an estate agreement, but it was so in actual fact. The landlord class has been

the curse of Ireland whether as her native chiefs, as Anglo-Norman lords, or as residential or absentee settlers. It is not going too far to say all the miseries, woes, and crimes of Ireland may be traced to them, for had they been what they should have been, humanitarian, the sympathetic friends of the people taking a kindly interest in them, encouraging, and helping and especially elevating them by their virtue, the history of the country would have been different. But that a country which was endowed by the Almighty with richness and fertility in a high degree, and in which prosperity as a result might reign, should have four-fifths of its population in a chronic state of starvation is a crime which could not have been perpetrated without atrocious wrongdoing.

Behind the landlord system there is the plain truth that those despised common Irish were the descendants of those who once possessed the land ; and, in a land which has long memories, is it likely that those who were so ground down ever forgot the parcels of land which were theirs by right ? These ideas were treasured amidst confiscations, proscriptions and persecutions, and the hope remained that one day they may come into their own again. In the turn of agitations and revolutions this hope remained. It is small wonder, then, if towards the end of the century, when a situation, which was none of their making, turned up, they were glad to take their share in freeing the country from the pest which dominated it. Little wonder then if they con-

tributed their quota to the situation so eloquently described by Hussy Burgh towards the end of the eighteenth century : "Talk not to me of peace. Ireland is not at peace ; it is smothered war. England has sown her laws as dragon's teeth : they have sprung up in armed men." The country was worn out and in no easy temper. There was discontent everywhere, but notably amongst the Presbyterian dissenters in the North of Ireland. They formed the chief menace against the government ; for while the Catholic Committee refrained for the most part from taking part in politics, the Catholics scattered throughout the country scarcely thought of their oppressions as things to be shirked, much less to be relieved of. Their chief concern was with warding off famine which had scourged them so regularly. In their misery they toiled and slaved, as the Israelites did in Egypt, for a miserable pittance, enduring fatigue and oppression with a fatalism that seemed ingrained in them. But it was merely the docility of servitude. Their only constant hope was to be found in their religion which, while it provided a much-needed solace, was not a thing which could be practised with the accustomed dignity owing to the continuous strain of the Penal Laws. Deprived of education and the essential requisites of human beings, the high-sounding phrases, "Rights of man," the "National Assembly of France," the "Bastille," were shibboleths that struck on deaf ears for the most part. But tyranny they did understand, and, when the franchise was

given in 1793—a thing which was denied in 1792 by 208 votes to 23—to the forty-shilling freeholders, the Catholics were quickened into new life. It marked a new era, small as the incident of granting the franchise was, and although the landlords were to profit immediately by the incident, for the franchised were driven as sheep to the booths, yet there was a feeling of superiority in that power of possessing a vote, and there was a growing interest associated even then around the work of the Catholic Committee and at a later date around the Committee of the Catholic Association. “As the slave retires, the man returns.”

The hopes raised by Pitt’s supposed policy of conciliation and his desire to withdraw restrictions on the Catholics sent a wave of new life throughout Ireland, and his sending over of Earl Fitzwilliam gave an appearance of verisimilitude to his designs. But it was the dastardly act of an impostor, of the politician who in difficulties will create a false atmosphere to tide his ministry over a dangerous period. To the incidents of gloom and disappointment which followed on the withdrawal of Fitzwilliam the country had become much accustomed. The disappointed hopes had a powerful reactionary effect even in the remotest districts in the country. They had been quickened to political life, but scarcely had it become vigorous than the hopes which inspired it disappeared. A desperation begotten of despair entered into the soul of Ireland there and then. And relief

came in one form or another—Maynooth, for instance, was founded, motivated by the policy of fear and the desire to prevent greater evils by seeming benevolence.

In these circumstances the Rebellion of 1798 broke out, instigated, wittingly or unwittingly, by Pitt and his lieutenants, through measures of wanton cruelty and repression. This was a time when there was a ferment of ideas resulting from events in America and on the Continent, and no people, no matter how insular, could escape from them. They had been propagated in the North of Ireland, by a people who since then have become very loyal, with a vehemence which knew no bounds short of a Republic. It would almost appear that these ideas were only baits for the Catholics; but that is not suggested, for a conviction impelled their advocates which enabled them to brave all trials if they saw a hope that their ideas would prevail. But, by a fatality of circumstances it was the unplotting Catholics who had to bear the brunt of the consequences in the end.

Without entering into the fruitless complexities arising from the rivalries of parties actuated by religious animosities, such as the Peep-o'-day Boys, the Orangemen, the Defenders and the Whiteboys, it is well to bear in mind that the country was kept in a state of panic by these organisations, which in some places were not above the level of mere marauding bands. By pillage and murder they gave a good deal of insecurity to life, and aroused much sectarian

bitterness at a time when union was necessary for the common cause. The Protestant party must stand primarily culpable for the bitterness engendered between the Catholic and the Protestant factions, though in a measure well-to-do and enlightened members of the Protestant church condemned and repudiated the excesses that resulted. The strifes between these factions gave the government a chance of interfering, and the despatch of troops into different portions of the country helped in great part to foment trouble and to frame the setting for the Rebellion, while frustrating the preparations for it which might otherwise be effected. Summary executions, the operations of press-gangs, and irritations of a lawless kind were the results of Government interference; the goading effect of these incidents was not lost in the people among whom they were enacted.

Great movements of thought may be likened to epidemics. They sweep through continents, and no barriers can withstand them in their headlong movement. The days of despotic government had run their course towards the end of the eighteenth century. As by a concerted plan most countries were convulsed; but in America and France success of an unexpected kind attended the movement. The wild and terrible days of Jacobinism excited a delirium of joy in the North of Ireland, while, not unnaturally, freedom's wave excited a thrill throughout the whole country. An embryo society there was, the United Irishmen, the

conception and plan of which—in its framework, and especially in its oath-bound secrecy—recommended it as the cradle from which freedom might come forth. With feverish haste plans were devised, and soon, under the auspices for the most part of influential Protestant leaders, branches of the society were founded in Belfast, Dublin, and throughout the whole country. The Presbyterian element dominated the Society in the North, but elsewhere it was mainly Protestant. Its device was freedom for all, reform of the Parliament, and suppression of tithes. This programme was reasonable, and might have attracted Catholics ; but what did attract them most to the United Irishmen was the bigotry and intolerance of the Orangemen. This secret society inspired by their hero William of Orange—though in person not too intolerant—attempted, with a fury almost fiendish, the extermination of Catholics in Ulster. Moreover, these Orangemen had a strong backing from the Established Church and later became allied with the government. By assassination and every form of threat, they drove several thousands of Catholics from Ulster, leaving them no alternative but to avenge their homes and their dead. By this time the whole country was embroiled : it was seething with revolution and anarchy, and expeditions had been despatched by foreign powers to establish a Republic. Unfortunately the leaders of the United Irishmen were impetuous : they staked everything on rebellion, and thus gave England the opportunity which

she had hoped for, even deliberately planned. The country was overrun with spies, and some were exercising the functions of *agents provocateurs*, while the excesses which were resorted to against the Defenders and the Whiteboys were of a kind which compelled the abandonment of restraint: by contrast, the Orangemen could carry out their depredations almost with impunity.

The suppression of the Rebellion was carried through with all the barbaric callousness and vindictiveness that could be expected only from half demented savages. The undisciplined militia and yeomanry were responsible for the strength of the rising in some districts. What with whippings, hangings, half-hangings, and pitch-capping, carried on by marauding bands of troops amongst a peaceful peasantry, the suppression of the Rebellion of 1798 remains as one of the choicest devices of diabolical fiendishness, an unattainable headline to savages of all races, no matter how barbarous.

The all-Ireland confederation of men of all creeds and all classes in the United Irishmen was not a success. The brunt of the trouble fell on the Catholics of the South; the North remained more or less inactive—it never came up to the hopes that were placed in it. The fanatical Orange mob was active at its own métier, but the Presbyterians did not support the cause, and some of them joined the yeomanry in hunting down rebels. Had there been a serious combination between the French and

the Irish, so that the rising and attack might be effected under an organised military plan, there is little doubt that the Rebellion would be effective. The numbers were sufficient, their courage of a daring kind, and all that they lacked was unified and coordinated attack. But, as it was, the United Irishmen never pulled their weight and, in places, only a mob was led to the slaughter.

It is useless to consider what might have been did the United Irishmen remain, as the Volunteers did previously, a strongly organised and menacing power. It may be hazarded that the Union could never have been effected. The United Irishmen were too much of the nature of a secret society, and its leaders were too high strung to play a waiting part. They have written a glorious page of history; their patriotism was as exalted as their adversaries' was degraded, and right-minded Irishmen shall never fear to speak of '98!

II

THE ENGLISH IN IRELAND

"The English carry their ill-judged tyranny too far; they deny the Irish the privilege of the laws. They force them from their homes, and compel them to seek an asylum in the woods and bogs; their insolence and tyranny have changed them into wild beasts."—*Hume*.

JAMES I gave the order: "Root out the Papists, plant Ireland with Puritans and secure it."

Robert Emmet in his speech from the dock said : " It was the wish of my heart to extricate my country from this doubly rooted despotism." The despotism of England and the despotism of the Orangemen was the curse of Ireland. The latter, like the landlords, were only the henchmen of the foreigner. Since the day that England, by a perfidious betrayal, set her foot in Ireland, she has increased the woes and troubles of a sorely tried Nation. " A junta of jobbers " Burke called the government of Ireland. A people alien in race (and, since the Reformation, alien in faith) have conquered, trampled on, and, as far as they could, tried to exterminate the native Irish. To help in this aggression a system of plantations was carried out by which the rightful owners were dispossessed and their lands handed over to imported settlers who were to hold the island in England's interest. The object of their existence was to preserve England's influence, and, as that was antagonistic to the country of their adoption, it could only be achieved by measures hostile to the welfare of Ireland. The Irish they looked on as an inferior race, fit to be slaves, and if they did not take willingly to that role it was the duty of the imported garrison to coerce them to it. Burke is explicit on it : " There was thus established a complete system full of coherence and consistency, well digested and composed in all its parts . . . a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment and degradation of a people, and

the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man." All the laws were so contrived as to bring about the aggrandisement of the ruling party and by a natural device to oppress the common people. In an hour of strife tithes were remitted the tenants by law and transferred to the landlords ; but, by a very natural act of cunning, the landlords raised the rents and thus transferred within the law the onus of payment again to the tenants. All that was in the best manner of the day—the very act of amelioration in name was but a cloak for an imposition. The English in Ireland were then a fraudulent class. "The Irish landlords, in their dealing with the tenants, have been little better than skilful thieves"—the judgment of an Englishman. This imported class believed that all right was on their side, and that there could be no injustice committed by them since they were the masters—the King can do no wrong—hence by right of this high dominion they either exterminated the native Irish—directly by the sword or indirectly by famine—or in the not less hideous way in which that renowned Protestant bishop, Lord Plunket, did it by evicting his tenants from their homes, in the depth of winter—when such an act was almost a sentence of death for an impoverished and famished people—largely because they refused to send their children to Protestant schools. Hence the English in Ireland were a murdering class. Grattan, of their own creed, said so of the henchmen suborned

by the Protestant and ruling class : " They call themselves Orangemen and Protestant Boys, they are a banditti of murderers committing massacre in the name of God, and exercising despotic powers in the name of liberty." " There are men possessing property in Ireland," says Lord Dufferin, " in whose honour, in whose sense of justice, in whose compassion, I for one, my lords, have no confidence whatever." It has been found on many occasions that the playing off of the Protestants against the Catholics was a good instrument of government, the latter being always the shock resisters. Lord Plunket is incisive in the matter : " I accuse the Government of fomenting the embers of a lingering rebellion, of hallooing the Protestant against the Catholic, of artfully keeping alive domestic dissensions for the purpose of subjugation."

For some centuries they have tried to impose Protestantism on the people in whose country they are aliens. They have tried to seduce them by an education specially contrived to that end, and, when they did not succeed in that way they tried to buy their souls at the price of their starving bodies. In these practices they still persist ; that is, they carry on that most ignoble of all traffics, the ghoulish one of soul snatching. Their superiority is, in their own estimation, the test of their righteousness, but of a kind that is steeped in criminal excesses, and has produced a mentality that is hard to get rid of. The days of sectarian fanaticism should have come to an end before this ; but

a junta, in whose existence it played such an important part in the past, is loth to part with it lest the assimilation, for which the Irish were so remarkable in the past, should come about, and thus, in manners, in customs, and in religion, they might become *hiberniores hibernis ipsis*. The Catholics of Ireland have had, even from their worst enemies, a good reputation for tolerance; but it must largely depend on the conversion of mind the English-tainted in Ireland will undergo in the near future whether they shall be so assimilated as to make our country their real home or remain as traitors within the gates fomenting religious war.

III

THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

ALL that has been said previously about the English government and the English in Ireland may with truth be applied to the Parliament in Ireland. It was composed at best of a junta who had achieved power and place through the influence of foreign domination. Its general temper was that of decided hostility to the common people who were looked on as an inferior race and were useful as serfs to supply them with money by which they might live a gayer, if not a more dissolute, life. For the most part the Members of Parliament were torn between the desire to please the Government, and thus were place-hunters, and the desire of self-

aggrandisement—that innate pride which is self-assertive and independent of interferences or compromises. At all times there was a minority that, from more or less pure motives, put Irish interests first ; these were often helped by a cabal of shifty views that was usually actuated by motives of jealousy, vengeance or soreness at not having attained office. Even from 1782 forwards, apart from certain enlightened and high-minded patriots, the Parliament was the most corrupt that could be conceived. How could it be otherwise since out of its three hundred members no more than seventy were returned by a free vote ? All the others were pensioners, placemen, borough-owners and jobbers. The Government, which is represented as that of an independent Irish Parliament, was a bureaucracy that did just what it liked indifferent to the interests of the country. Grattan seemed to have overlooked the fact that the Irish executive was independent of Parliament and was directly responsible to English ministers. In current language it was called an independent Parliament, but Grattan must have flattered himself that he had triumphed when he had gained only a Pyrrhic victory. This is a very material point, for it must lessen, in imagination at least, that haunting romantic idea of a truly Irish Parliament. The whole institution was a strong phalanx of Protestant representation sworn to protect Protestant interests. The Catholics had no representative in it, and, for a time, had no vote ; neither would they have

got it had it been left wholly in the discretion of the Irish Parliament. This, of course, did not prevent the Parliament touting for Catholic support. It sounds very strange, but it is none the less true, that high-minded men, who sympathized with Catholics and were anxious to bring them relief in Parliament, would not hear of their receiving the franchise. In 1792 an enlightened and tolerant Parliament rejected by 208 votes to 23 the proposal to grant the franchise to Catholics. It was granted in 1793, but through England's influence. Even in that Parliament through suggestion, through bribery and the distribution of patronage, the English government was always able to prevail.

Irishmen have no reason to grieve for that Parliament, or for any other one that was since the native institutions ceased to be. It merely served to perpetuate alien domination and to sow corruption and discord in the heart of the nation. If it is regretted, it is because it was a symbol behind which was shrouded and hidden away that magic power—Liberty.

IV

THE CATHOLIC OUTLOOK

THE eighteenth century in Ireland is remarkable for the scourge of the Penal Laws which were put in operation against the Catholics with a view to their extermination. By the Treaty of Limerick a large amount of liberty was given

to the Catholics, who formed more than four-fifths of the population, but it was filched from them by the Treaty-breakers. Now, they could not acquire land, they were excluded from the profession of law, they were denied the franchise; priests and prelates were banished, and if they returned they were hanged. A premium was put on conversion to Protestantism in order to sow dissension in families: "perfidious means, adopted by a wicked legislature to influence men's consciences by corrupt motives, and tempt and bribe them to apostacy." Education was denied the people, at home or abroad, and large rewards were offered for the spying out of bishops, unregistered priests, members of religious orders and schoolmasters. All this was accomplished by an Irish Parliament in which only Protestants sat.

In the undying spirit of the race the people faced all this hardship with a stout heart, but, in so doing, underwent appalling trials which had the result of impoverishing and degrading them. Their will to live overcame many a difficulty, and the humanitarian spirit of some of their Protestant neighbours helped them at times. The priests and bishops who were banned remained working amongst their people, but were constantly in hiding places or, trusting to the fidelity of their neighbours out on the mountain side, saying Mass and ministering to sick and dying. Spies were everywhere, but they were specially alert in searching out unregistered priests—the majority of whom were

so because they would not acknowledge an usurping and unjust government—and schoolmasters, and inquiring into the tenure under which Catholics held landed property.

The hedge school is a triumph of this period. While not reaching all the masses, it did those who were desirous of advancement, and thus was especially useful in giving the rudiments of education to those who were afterwards to pursue their studies on the Continent. Parents with the courage of the martyrs sent their children to foreign countries for education, and a constant stream of priests was thus kept up. Going abroad as mere youths they soon returned with a culture that is proverbial, fully equipped to perpetuate the religion of their ancestors. Only by an indomitable constancy and an undying devotion did the country retain its religion. Not with a light heart could all that be accomplished. The struggle for existence was a constant one, and, on account of the law which prevented Catholics becoming owners of land, those who possessed anything were mainly of the cottier-tenant type. That is, they worked a small strip of land, which they had from the landlord on short term, and for which they paid a considerable rent as well as tithes. These holders were always on the border-land of starvation. Much has been said of the great boom in Ireland from 1782. That did not affect the Catholics, except in a very small way ; for it was chiefly in cities amongst merchants and the manufacturing class it was felt and also

amongst the large owners who had grain and stock to export. In the middle of the century cottier-tenants were driven off their lands by the landlords who wished to enclose their estates in big ranches. Bog land was given the cottier-tenant in exchange. This he tried to reclaim under an overwhelming burden of rent and tithes. The commoners were enclosed at this time too, and this to the detriment of the cottier-tenant and labouring man. The lot of the labouring class, which comprised the bulk of the Catholics, was rendered the more unenviable by the fact that they were generally paid in kind, and received but very little money. Judged by any human standard the lot of the Irish Catholic was very sad, and even the most generous relief from the Penal Laws could not bring about their civic betterment for a long time. "Of the Catholic laity at least nineteen-twentieths were too poor and too ignorant to be affected by any disabling laws or to take any interest in political questions," says Lecky. They were veritable slaves.

In the latter portion of this eighteenth century, relief was given in the matter of the tenure of land, and we soon find springing up a number of Catholic gentry, descendants, for some part, of aristocratic families, while others belonged to the merchant class, that had survived all the persecutions. These received their education on the Continent, notably in France, and at a very early time in their evolution showed a decided inclination to side with the government in

political matters. This was very much to be attributed to their training on the Continent, where they saw the anarchy brought about by fanatics both in the anti-religious and political spheres : it was also the result of a reasoned attitude towards the distinct situation that prevailed in Ireland. The country was in a ferment of disorder from factions ; did these—as they were likely to—gravitate to the extreme measures of the Jacobins of France, as exemplified by the guillotining in Paris, the massacres of September, or the drownings at Nantes, with the enthronement of the Goddess of Reason thrown in, what would be the plight of the country ? None of the factions could bring salvation, for their object was destruction ; hence the only force to be relied on was a Government that, through the forces of the crown, would save the country at least from any great disorder ! In their eyes, Tone was nothing better than an arch-Jacobin, so were all the other plotters and their many minions. The clergy were of this way of thinking too, through their education and their desire to uphold the law of God. It would be hard to conceive them looking on with equanimity at the trial of strength between the Defenders and the Orangemen. From the Volunteers their people were, for the most part, excluded ; into the United Irishmen therefore they went, not as having a part in its higher councils, but as pikemen to bear the shock of the cavalry attack. The more docile portion of their flocks held

themselves aloof from these pitfalls until, in many cases, goaded into them. This was a very natural attitude for educated people to take in the circumstances, and it is hard for anybody, except ignorant wiseacres after the event, or those actuated by political spleen, to condemn that attitude. To fight for the Parliament was to fight for corruption that would not be reformed; to fight at all was but to exhaust your energy in favour of a Protestant domination. If there is room for criticism, it is to the effect that there was a tendency on the part of the Catholic aristocracy to prove their loyalty by "hyperbolical" addresses to the Government—but, betimes, these were flung back at them as importunate demands. This should have been a sufficient damper to their ardour. Withal, they showed a noble courage in organization, which was not lost on the mass of Catholics.

V

THE PRESBYTERIANS

THE Presbyterians in Ireland, as would be naturally expected of dissenters, did not look with any favour on British intervention in Ireland. Moreover, they kept up a bitter hostility towards the Government in Ireland, it being but the instrument of official Protestantism as by State established. Beyond paying tithes, from which they did not benefit themselves, it is not easy to see what other grievance they had.

From the Catholic point of view, they were the next favoured after the official church: they were imported Scotsmen who had got large tracts of land, which belonged to the Catholics, during the plantations; they had done well on the soil and grown rich. This progress in wealth may account for the change in temper which the Presbyterians adopted in the course of time towards Protestants and Catholics. At first they detested Protestants in an extreme way, and were prepared to go any lengths in sedition to injure them. By the end of the eighteenth century they had their part in dispossessing the Catholics of Ulster, and creating difficulties for them in order to get possession of their land. It is said that their "hatred of the Roman Catholics is very great, so much so that should we be admitted in any corps (of Volunteers), they declared they never would join with them, as a spirit of Defenderism and revenge exists in that body against administration. This violent change has been wrought within the year—a change fraught with the best consequences to our King and Constitution." Their defection from the movement which was of their own making in the North—the desire to establish a Republic by armed force, through the United Irishmen—was a great triumph for the Government and Protestant party, for now all would be united against the common enemy the Catholics. And so it was that, when the Rebellion broke out, the well-to-do Presbyterians flocked in thousands to aid the Government in putting it down.

"I think the Northern Dissenter will now quietly be a spectator of that *destructive flame which he himself originally kindled up*, and will take no active part in the present attempt," said Dean Warburton.

"The rebels in the North were only miscreants of the lowest kind," commented Bishop Percy, adding: "A wonderful change has taken place among republicans in the North, especially in and near Belfast. They now abhor the French as much as they formerly were partial to them, and are grown quite loyal." Thus they were in the best traditions of Parsons and Borlase, bigoted Presbyterians, and of the Scotch garrison that slaughtered the inhabitants of the Island Magee.

This betrayal by the Presbyterians was a very material thing for the interests of the Catholics. It showed them the real kidney of Protestantism under all its guises, in the Parliament, in government, as exhibited in the landlord class, in the virulence of Orangeism, and now in the defection of the Presbyterians, and proved to them that within the shores of Ireland they had no compact body on which they could depend. Sympathisers they had in all quarters, amongst parliamentarians, and even amongst Protestants, both clerical and lay—there were liberal-minded Protestant bishops, like Bristol of Derry, and broadminded parsons—but in the day of trial, the Catholics were sure to be abandoned and to find several of their sympathisers of the nature of Job's comforters. This state of affairs must

be carefully noted on account of its decisive effect when the Catholic attitude towards the Union is considered. By a strange paradox it was knit up with a saying of Grattan's which Protestants thought of little consequence: "The Irish Protestant never could be free whilst the Irish Catholic was a slave."

THE UNION

THE Act of Union has more than one nauseating aspect for all honest men. The way in which it was carried is too notorious now to need any elaboration. It is an evidence of the pernicious influence of the alien mind in things political and in all kindred things. The Union was effected between England and the Protestants of Ireland who sold their fellow-countrymen into slavery as Joseph was sold by his brothers to the Ishmaelites. So there was Biblical precedent for the act of perfidy. "There is no blacker or fouler transaction in the history of man than the making of the Union between England and Ireland," says Gladstone. That men who are entrusted with the superior interests of a country can be bought is so revolting to the right-minded that discussion of it only raises it to the plane of a reasonable factor. Better it was buried in the slough and mire of obloquy to which tradition has consigned it!

The country stood aghast at such an act of treachery and was "like a corpse on the

dissecting table." Shiel has said of the time immediately after the Union's consummation: "The country was in a state of degradation and unwholesome tranquillity. We sat down like galley-slaves in a calm . . . the country was palsied to the heart." The phase of the Union which most concerns those who reflect is, what hope was there for a regenerated Ireland as long as the Parliament was made up of aliens all in religion and the most in race? The pact of Union was never made with the Irish nation, for it was neither represented nor consulted freely. The placemen, pensioners and jobbers did not represent the nation. The nation then contracted no national stigma, and the Union had no binding effect. The Irish people were in tutelage and had no responsibility for an act of duress. As to the question of alternative between regeneration of the Parliament and suppression of it by the Union, an open revolution was impossible owing to the failure of the United Irishmen, though if that episode had not been badly bungled by betrayal, by indecision, by want of unity, above all, by bad generalship, there was no reason why it might not have been a success especially in the light of our modern experiences. A peaceful revolution had no chance of overturning the Parliament so entrenched was it in its infamy and power. Grattan might have mobilised thousands of Volunteers and prevented the Union being voted. But what then? The Volunteers had previously tried to reform it and had not succeeded. Was

there any hope of it being accomplished now ? None whatsoever, as far as it is humanly possible to judge, since it was composed of "skilful thieves," "a junta of jobbers," and the dregs of society : the reform which should come from within would not have inception at their hands. But the supreme act of betrayal was the more criminal as the previous attitude of Parliament to their countrymen and country was nefarious. Between the two alternatives of Union or a wallowing in corruption and incapacity and rapaciousness, it were better a thousand times that, Judas-like, the Parliament should have recourse to the supreme act of a grand *auto-da-se*. Somebody has said : "Had it (Catholic Emancipation) been carried as part of the Union, the Union would have been regarded by the Catholic masses only as the extinction of a corrupt and bigoted assembly." If the Union under that condition would have such a benign effect, why not also without any compromise of a *quid pro quo* ! It would be in either case only the extinction of something vile, and it were better not give it the verisimilitude of something worth bargaining about—Vile things are rejected, not bartered. The Bastille was the symbol of tyranny in France, its counterpart was the Parliament in College Green.

So far, the consideration has been of a concrete nature concerned with that corrupt body called the Irish Parliament of the eighteenth century. It has thus regarded men rather than the institution. The conclusion arrived at does not imply

that Union was the right method of procedure. The Parliament had no mandate for such an act, and the country was free to consider it as not having taken place. In the ordinary evolution of things institutions, though atrophied for a time, and even for a long time, regain vigour again from some internal circumstances. So it may be taken that its moribund condition was temporary, that a new life was possible notwithstanding all its shortcomings, and that the Nation would have it endure.

There is an ideal in institutions that can live apart from the associations which encompass them, but which are not inherent. The Irish Parliament remained unsullied in the heart of the Nation notwithstanding all the pollution that abounded by the Liffey; it was the ideal self-respect of the Nation. Generations looked to it as a medium of relief, and if it were not forthcoming in their day they were satisfied that it was only deferred. Israel sighed for a Deliverer though the prophets denounced the abominations of the Sacred city—*Quomodo facta est mentrin civitas fidelis, plena judicii!*—while from that same city liberation was to come. So too in our land, despite the abomination of desolation, sighs and groans went towards that Parliament even though no portents of relief were in sight. And how many generations have looked back since 1800 to that monument in College Green, and how many thrills have awakened, how many echoes have resounded, how many hopes have been inspired! The ideal

lived on, and it has been an inspiration to the race. Those columns of that stately building appeared to the Gael of the homeland and of the dispersion like so many sentinels guarding the sacred fire from which would spring once again Phoenix-like a spirit to irradiate a dull world and rejuvenate an oppressed people.

And so it has been. The sacred fire was kept alive and the ideal has emerged untarnished. That is the only point worth considering in the Union question now. Where men and minds failed, the stones cried out and the measure of iniquity has been avenged. Eureka!

To be indifferent to the existence of the Irish Parliament is an attitude that might very well commend itself: it is an attitude that is altogether different from that of actively voting away its existence: that was done by its own corrupt members. The question of acquiescence on the part of outsiders is one of expediency, not of principle. An intellectual class keenly hostile to corruption and jobbery, as was the morale of the Parliament, would consider it a duty of honour to rid the country of such an incubus in the hope that a day might come when a more worthy body would assume the representation of the Nation. The Parliament's independence had been previously lost and restored, hence there was no reason for thinking that, if suppressed, it might not be restored under better conditions. To criticise an age one must steep oneself in its atmosphere and imbibe its *ethos*. Who can be sure then that, if he had lived at the

end of the eighteenth century, he would not be similarly placed, and have desired the lesser of two evils—the Union. With unrelieved and indestructible bareness on the side of the Parliament, to ask a party or individuals with refined minds to palliate to tolerance the acts of such a body would be to strain conscience and human nature beyond their limits: *Non tali auxilio!*

O'Connell said that he would rather trust to his Protestant fellow-countrymen than lay his country at the feet of the foreigner. He forgot that those whom he called his "Protestant fellow-countrymen" were aliens and corrupt aliens. Better an honest and liberal-minded foreigner! The Dublin Corporation knew what it wanted when it declared for: "a Protestant king of Ireland, a Protestant Parliament, a Protestant hierarchy, Protestant electors and Government, the benches of justice, the army, and the revenue, through all their branches and details, Protestant; and this system supported by a connection with the Protestant realm of England." What chance was there for the native Irish in that combination!

THE CATHOLIC PARLIAMENT, THE CATHOLIC COMMITTEE AND CATHOLIC ASSOCIATIONS

By the passing of the Act of Union the Catholic body lost nothing which they could call theirs. A home Parliament was lost to the Protestant

party ; the Catholics had still their own, which met at sundry times and especially in times of crisis. It was known successively by different names, for it was honoured with suppression ; but, like the chameleon, it changed at the approach of danger. It began in 1759 as the Catholic Committee, it was later known as the Catholic Board, still later as the Catholic Association, and finally in the insuppressible guise of the Catholic Association “for all purposes not prohibited by law.” Composed of the most alert and interested leaders of the Catholic body, its purpose, in its early stages, was that of guarding and fostering Catholic interests rather than embarking on a constructive policy. It played an important part in warning the people of the dangers and snares which encompassed them, in seeking a relaxation of the Penal Laws, and in showing by addresses and acts of loyalty that it was not a den of thieves and cut-throats such as the Orange faction. As the Catholic Association it showed itself in a constructive way, and worked for a definite end and policy—Catholic Emancipation.

Never was the power and strength of a party better asserted under discipline than it was by the Catholic Association. Its significance did not fail to impress the Government. With the people throughout the country formidably mobilised in its branches, with “rent” paid, with an enthusiasm inspired by the objective, with an exchange of views on policy and recommendations from all quarters with an informality

that parliaments do not attain, a new impetus was given to the hopes of the Catholics. Suppress it as they might, it was sure to rise again in a more powerful combination, while its sense of resolve was the more strengthened as it reacted to opposition. Like a chain, it held and knit the fighting power of Ireland, and, though its weapons were all those that make for peace, it had the menace of war in its resoluteness to see things rectified in its day. Already, much valuable time had been lost, already much strength had been frittered away in useless debates and differences; and, if the Catholic aristocracy could not stand all square with the common people in enacting their demands, it was better to be rid of them as they were a weakness, with aims that were not in harmony with Irish life. Shoneenism has been a sterile aim in the life of the country; it has produced a race of half-adventurers, half-masqueraders that would not shake the dust of Ireland from their feet but yet always opposed her higher interests—this was signally manifested on the Veto question. Their ideals, as far as they have had any, were derived from beyond the sea, but they suffered the penalty of being bad Irish types and very hopeless English ones. If their accents sounded boisterous in Ireland, they sounded barbarous in England. They would be English in allegiance and outlook, but they were more often than not treated with contumely in that Society which they affected.

With the Union passed and the debris of

England's corruption scattered about, there remained for the Catholics of the country to rebuild their own native culture which had been blighted, to lay the foundations of their own social life, to reorganize thought along those lines which were typical of the country, and to fortify themselves in their own ideals. This the Catholic Association went far in doing: it taught self-reliance and a consciousness of power through self-expression and daring. It was Canning said of the Catholic Association that it performed "all the functions of a regular government, and had a complete mastery and control over the masses of the Irish people." Long before this in 1792 the Catholic Committee had been called the "Back-Lane Parliament." And even though at times, through a misconception of proper aims on the part of its leaders, it tilted at windmills, yet the speedy results, small as they were, enthused them with self-confidence. When under O'Connell, in his later period, they were drifting towards a blind alley, there was a danger of a set back in the whole development. But they had already made such headway that there was no fear of lapsing back into inertia—the Tithe War, more than anything else, saved them and gave them heart. Davis, too, had already appeared, and he with his associates, Dillon, Duffy, O'Brien, Mitchel, pulled the country from the slough of despondency. A nation has thus always the power of self-regeneration. Davis was the educational force that strung together the logic of the

situation, and Mitchel supplied the inspiration when he said, "better perish by British bayonets than by her laws." This was not a counsel of despair as was that other one in memory of the Spartan dead: "Stranger, go tell the Lacedaemonians that we lie here in obedience to their commands."

"Educate that you may be free" was the motto of Davis. He recognised that the issue between England and Ireland was a moral one, so was that between the Catholics and the Protestants. Education would foster conciliation, but one that was based on the recognition of rights and duties. If Protestants could not be so impressed, at least the Irishman could be fired with his own dignity and self-respect, two things that would secure his political survival; for, if England failed to do her part, then it was the duty of all Irishmen to combine against her and fight for liberty. This was the natural convergence of Davis and Mitchel, two who looked like poles apart. They caught a glimmer of the light of freedom, but it was doomed to be dimmed for many a day until those whom they inspired combined and won through against terrific odds.

THE VETO

THE Veto in itself was a very innocuous proposal, and should not have excited all the attention and comment that it provoked within the time that it was an actuality, as also since then, but

that the source from which it proceeded was suspect and thought incapable of anything not of sinister design. Its equivalent—what later is known as a Concordat—was an understanding that prevailed in some Catholic States, entered into between the responsible head of the State and the Holy See. For the most part it implied that the State in question contributed something towards the upkeep of cult, usually in giving salaries to the clergy, for which it expected, in return, a *say* in the nomination of the higher clergy, while expecting some testimony of loyalty, or at least the absence of disaffection, in the case of those who were appointed parish priests. In the interest of religion the latter portion—the not presenting to sees or benefices except those who were sure to be looked on with favour by all—was very much a working principle even where there was no understanding. The Church is averse to any imbroglio, and would not have religion impeded by the promotion of one whose first and last interest was not the salvation of his flock. Hence then, at all times, the equivalent of a tacit understanding may be said to prevail in that matter, for the higher interests of religion. Still, though this is so, it would be considered unusual to give a Protestant power, such as England has been, a *say* in the intimate matter of ecclesiastical appointments. England was the declared enemy of Ireland and of the clergy more particularly, whose extermination she had striven to effect. As a result, it was natural to conclude that overtures for a Veto coming from

such a source foreboded nothing good: *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*. In regard to Irishmen generally, who believed in a free and untrammelled priesthood, such overtures hit them in the very apple of their eye, for it seemed to them as if their birthright, all that was sacred, all that they fought for, was now about to be bartered in a treasonable agreement—it was disloyalty to their country, and a premium was put on such disloyalty, for to be a *persona grata* with England implied advancement and *vice versa* under such an understanding. Thus it took the form in the public mind of a betrayal of most sacred things.

The first mention we find of the Veto was in a letter of Edmund Burke to an Irish peer in 1782. It was at a time when storm clouds were gathering in Europe and when far-seeing politicians were already scanning the horoscope and making their dispositions of things in accordance. Burke, with his usual good sense and his Irish feeling, was not slow in condemning such a venture, as he saw in it an attempt to restrict the spiritual influence of the Church by reducing its clergy to the position of functionaries of a hostile state. But, be that as it may, as the years passed, this Veto notion was ripening in the Government's mind. With the establishment of Maynooth in 1795 suitable circumstances were offered for considering such a subject. England was glad to see the Irish priests trained at home, away from the radical views of the Continent; but the thought that the home

training might lead to a too independent attitude on matters political suggested that some guarantees of loyalty be sought. Daily it looked as if England was undergoing a compulsory change of heart. Her influence on the Continent was rapidly disappearing under Napoleon's tyranny and triumphs. The reception she had given the French *emigres* had delighted all hearts, and the welcome and hospitable treatment which she extended to the French clergy, who had to fly their country during the Revolution, surprised even those who could think no evil of her. In many ways, England was cultivating friendly relations with the Holy See, and even going so far as to extend protection to Vatican interests. She was nursing in a very careful way also the sympathy of the reactionary forces in Europe, and they happened to be Catholic too in outlook. Burke notably had brought this point of view to the forefront of politics by his "Reflections on the French Revolution," in which he brought out the connected force of historical associations in Church and State. He gives as a characteristic of Englishmen, "their awe of kings and reverence for priests." It may be taken for granted that a selfish motive was behind all this liberal diplomacy, and that even the principle *divide ut imperes* was the impelling principle when there was question of Ireland. The days of democratic reawakening had come, and it would be well to hold in leash those who had the influence over the Irish people. The insistence, then, of England, both

in Ireland and in Rome, for pressing the Veto question was diplomatically urgent. For a while, it was thought that it might be a set-off against Emancipation, and the matter was seriously considered in that light in 1799. It must be borne in mind that the country was in a very lawless condition then and demoralised beyond description. Leaders of the people, both lay and ecclesiastical, were looking for some power that would steady the life of the country and not expose it to cataclystic experiments such as that experienced in 1798. The Union was in the air also as practical politics, and to the well-intentioned it might easily seem an opportunity for promoting stability. Beyond such a consideration, there was no entertainment of the Veto, and the solid Catholic body refused to consider it ; and even, as far as it was considered at all on the Catholic side, it was only tentative. Soon the Union was passed, and the actuality of the question ceased for a time until it was taken up by representatives of the Catholic gentry. These had an unbounded belief in it as a panacea for Ireland's ills, and they, together with the British Government, pressed its furtherance in Rome. The disturbed state of Europe at the time, and principally within the Papal States—the Pope was either actually or virtually a prisoner all the time—prevented mature consideration being given to the question by his Holiness. Betimes, the ultra-emphatic representation made in Rome against it by representative Irish Catholics did not make a favourable

impression ; rather it deepened the feeling that revolutionary views were pervading that body. Soon the voice of an united Ireland prevailed, and the subject was dropped. Historically the whole matter should be considered as the groping after security at a time when, through the success of revolutionary upheavals, valuations were changing and when new attempts were being made to burthen old institutions. In the general bewilderment, many representations got a tentative adherence until there was more time for investigation and an assessment of values.

In ultimate analysis, the Veto was but hypothetical, tenuous both in nature and in offer. It was made at a time when the country was sorely tried ; but in a country like Ireland, where there has always been a decided antipathy to alien government, its proposals partook of the nature of a betrayal of most sacred things apart from any considerations that might be given them. For the substantial things of religion Irish Catholics have been ready to sacrifice their lives. That is a cherished tradition which pertains to the very struggle which has gone on in the country since the Reformation. In this state of mind it is not to be wondered at if the accidental things are sometimes confounded with the substance, and as a result an exaggerated importance is attached to mere amenities which in the circumstances are grave, but which, objectively, may be but of small account.

Feudalism has left its mark on the customs and habits of all European peoples, and in

Catholic countries that feudalism has left a desire on the part of sovereigns to have some say in the appointment of those raised to important ecclesiastical functions, especially bishops. The royal placet, for dynastic and other reasons, especially in the days of prince bishops, was a precaution to secure the appointment of a *persona grata* to the ruling power. It was looked upon almost as a commonplace of ecclesiastical life in Catholic countries. Napoleon's Concordat with Pius VII brought the matter further into evidence at the beginning of the last century. And hence England, which excels in diplomatic skill, would not be behindhand where there was an opportunity of meddling in church affairs. She was accustomed to a State Church in her own established system. But the clergy who had been trained abroad, for the reason that they were denied education in their own country, had a natural bias against England and did not have the temper of assisting her in her bargaining efforts. The concession then would be much or little from the point of view from which it is looked at. Even though it were granted in all its baldness, it was not likely to be of much consequence—it would be morally impossible, it may be assumed, to find a brood of placemen amongst Irish ecclesiastics. Hence the whole matter is reduced to a question of expediency out of which it is impossible to make posthumous capital. For this reason it would seem to be only hollow pedantry to follow too closely the genesis and sequence of the Vetoistic design.

Yet, strange to say, it is over this academic question that much ink is spilt and passions are aroused, but inversely to the competence of treating such a question which is allied to statecraft.

Ireland was long a serpent-strangled Laocoon, and her every effort to shake off the horrible monster was inspired by suspicion of some new clinging device. And so her more ardent sons often shared phantoms, and their fears built, in imagination, mountains out of ant hills. Exuberant imagination takes its hopes or predictions for realities, and finds in the gilded clouds of fancy a foundation on which to build practical policies.

VETO HISTORY

A CHRONOLOGICAL setting forth of the different stages of the history of the Veto will bear out the reality of all that has been asserted thus far.

Under the pressure of the terror resulting from the repressions of 1798, which was still very much in the public mind, the Bishops of Ireland were asked to consider the advisability of giving certain "securities" regarding the appointments of higher ecclesiastics. This, if agreed to, would amount to a guarantee that some security would be given to the British Government whereby persons supposed to be inimical to good relations between the two countries would be eliminated from promotion to the higher ecclesiastical ranks.

The considerations given to this suggestion, and the resolutions of Maynooth, 1799, were altogether tentative : they bound nobody, and so it was understood on both sides. There was but what takes place in ordinary negotiations : a simple exchange of views in the first instance. The conclusions which were reached at this time in favour of negotiations were dependent on the supposed good intentions of the British Government, a matter which was gone back of once the true nature of the overtures and events was understood. It became obvious as matters developed that the intention of the British Government was to render innocuous the power of the clergy in Ireland, and to sow dissension between them and the people, or, as it were, to fetter the people through the clergy. With the remembrance of the part played by priests in leading and protecting their people in '98 it was natural that the British should desire to break their power.

Thus the English Government's policy of seeking such guarantees was one that took shape in the minds of English politicians during the last decade of the eighteenth century. The inevitableness of the necessity of relief of some sort for Catholics they foresaw, and they were anxious that there should be a consideration in the negotiations, that their gift ought to be met by some security for a loyal clergy. By founding Maynooth in 1795, they had removed the aspirants to the Irish priesthood from Continental contamination, but that did not suffice—so the

English politicians thought—for the complete security which was sought. All this may be gathered from sundry events; for, let it be stated clearly, the question of “securities” at this time had all the vagueness and nebulousness of immaturity about it, and the different members of Government, who were most interested, had no definite notions on it, or, at least, were not prepared to commit themselves to any towards the end of the eighteenth century. The situation was changing from day to day in Ireland, so was it on the Continent where England had much to fear, and hence there was no definite trend in affairs, which connotes a settled and definite policy. The minds of the Irish bishops were very clear on the interference of England in the appointment of bishops in 1795; for on the 17th February of that year to the question: “What do they think of a proposal that our bishops be nominated by the King”? the answer was: “The proposal is to be resisted *in limine*.” From that answer the bishops of Ireland never swerved, and it is only by confounding the inevitable with a free act that it can be deduced that in 1799 some of the bishops were prepared to grant not a Veto but some concession such as would satisfy the Government of the loyalty of the person appointed, but which would not diminish the religious influence of pastors over their flocks. Thus the Veto was not at all in question at this time, and, quite a different matter, one of guarantees was tentatively discussed at Maynooth on the occasion of a meeting

to arrange business connected with the college. The bishops then were few in number, ten in all ; and they gave only a personal view, but not a considered one, as the matter was still in its infancy. They did not fail to assert that "such regulations can have no effect without the sanction of the Holy See"; and they might, indeed, have added, if they expressed their minds fully, that "when things become more definite and take shape, even we, the signatories, may not be prepared to make such concessions." In the words of Dr. Troy, none of the signatories liked the resolutions, but they felt that something had to be done under the circumstances to draw off a Government that had dyed the Irish soil with so much blood the previous year. The bishops could not afford to be too independent at that time, January, 1799: but a document indeterminate in nature and definition could not incriminate them too much, while it might give the desired satisfaction. "Forced by necessity, under due conditions and with due limitations," the document was drawn up by "Prelates (who) were anxious to set aside or elude it, but being unable to do so, determined to have the rights of the Church secured." This had the effect of nullifying the effects of the resolutions already made. Hence Dr. Troy could say of this first step in the discussions regarding guarantees: "It is false, quite false, that any plan has been arranged." Equally is it quite false historically to say that the bishops had thus far given anything away.

When the Veto was introduced for the first time in 1808 it is easy to summarise now what their attitude was likely to be. But there is no room for doubt on the point, and here there is a confirmation of their previous attitude. Here is their statement at their meeting of September 14th of that year: "it is inexpedient to introduce any alteration in the canonical mode hitherto observed in the nomination of Roman Catholic bishops, which mode, by long experience, has proved to be unexceptionable, wise and salutary." Now was the time, if the bishops were Vetoists, to take advantage of the friendly efforts being shown in favour of Catholics in Parliament, for there was much to gain in so doing. But, instead, they repudiate the gifts offered now for the first time to them in definite shape, and as a practical scheme that may be judged as a whole, and not as in the nature of a suggestion as we have seen previously. There was no hesitancy in the matter either; for, when their representative in London, Dr. Milner, seemed to misinterpret their minds, he was brought quickly to task. In this light, the resolutions of 1799 appear more intelligible to the candid inquirer, for nothing but the clarity of development had affected the attitude of the bishops in the intervening time; a clarity which came partly from the self-reliance which enabled the country to escape from the imbroglio of the Insurrection period of '98, partly from the now disclosed aim of the British ministers.

The next step was one precipitated by the

English Catholics with the help of a few of the Irish gentry, people of whom it was asserted in the Irish Parliament in 1795, that "the Catholic gentlemen were already more than half Protestant." The English Catholics were cowered, apprehensive, frightened, very self-conscious, and inclined to cringe to Government. In Ireland, Catholics of the wealthier class were Unionists and Vetoists, unconsciously, if not consciously, at the end of the eighteenth century. These two parties fused in 1810 to arrange concessions with the English ministers; but, through no fault of theirs, English bigotry defeated them, as it did again in 1813. It was in that year that the Irish bishops declared they could not accede to Canning's Veto Bill "without incurring the Guilt of Schism." The English Vetoists, not dispirited by defeat at home, now transferred the agitation to Rome, and by misrepresentation mainly—explaining the harmless effect of Vetoistic concessions as compared with the boon to be reaped, Catholic Emancipation—got from Monsignor Quarantolli on February, 1814, a Rescript which admitted that the Veto notions, as explained to him (*haec cum ita sint*) were not opposed to Catholic principles. Mgr. Quarantolli had been misled by the ardent English Vetoists (though technically he saved himself by the phrase: *haec cum ita sint*) and had exceeded his powers, for the Pope himself later "thinks it inconsistent with the prudence it demanded to pronounce his final decision on a question of such importance." When the Pope did give his

advice, not a decision, and though under a compliment to the British for their kindness to him during troubled days on the Continent, it was only to show what points might be conceded, and what must be safeguarded. Vetoists, however ardent, could find but very little comfort in the shadow of their project thus left, and British ministers found less, for the Veto was dropped thenceforward. It must be borne in mind that the Pope never asked the Irish bishops to accept even the mutilated and tenuous form of Veto contained in Cardinal Litta's letter. In 1821 there was brought forward again a "Catholic Relief Bill" together with "a Bill to regulate the intercourse between persons in Holy Orders and the See of Rome," which went beyond the stipulations of Cardinal Litta's and which some of the laity would accept, but which the bishops condemned as it would press "upon the essential exercise of the Roman Catholic ministry, with great, unnecessary and injurious severity."

Reduced to a simple statement of fact, the bogies aroused by political renegades regarding the Veto, the subserviency of the episcopate to English influence, and Rome's inclination to serve the efforts of the English in Ireland, all disappear. It is useless to speak to some people about facts, so hidebound are they by ignorance and prejudice; they prefer captious clap-trap to the less sensational verdict of truth. Envenomed vituperation goes far with the mob, and it has been the stock-in-trade of tendentious political demagogues that, fortunately, Ireland has

rarely produced. To placate a Protestant political party that despised them, they have thundered their independence in politics, and hoisted spooks so as to give verisimilitude to their cowardly assertions—Home Rule was not to be Rome rule, and the lay mind could assert itself against the intrigues of Castle bishops. These were the people who promised so many times to have our own green flag waving over College Green at a not far distant date! Fortunately, the nation has got rid of that stump orator that for a century blighted all the prospects of the country in a series of mystifications, soft talk in Westminster, and the pompousness of oratory at home.

O'Connell understood the action of the Irish bishops in the struggle against the Veto when in May, 1813, he moved that the thanks of the Catholic Board be sent to them "for their vigilant and zealous attention to the interests of the Catholic Church in Ireland." The Veto was then defeated, and O'Connell understood that it was defeated by the persistent hostility of the bishops, and that at a time when many laymen of the better class were in favour of the Veto as an exchange for Emancipation, or anything else that could be secured. Moreover, the enthusiasts against episcopal blundering forget that in 1821 O'Connell warmed to a Veto which, as already stated, the Irish bishops said would, if enacted into law, "press upon their Order, and upon the essential exercise of the Roman Catholic ministry, with great, unnecessary, and

injurious severity." O'Connell likewise proved himself a Vetoist in his evidence before the Select Committees of the Houses of Lords and Commons.

THE BISHOPS AND THE VETO

It is often asserted that some of the bishops acted in a disloyal way towards Ireland—some say that they betrayed Ireland to England—at the time of the Union inasmuch as they favoured it, and to a certain extent also at the time of the Veto discussion. This accusation was made in the first instance by the sworn enemies of Ireland, place-hunting Protestants and aliens out of whose hands the bishops in question were anxious, with very good reason, to deliver themselves. It was made with the decided object of creating discontent, of driving a wedge between the pastors and their flocks, *divide ut imperes*, divide and rule, and sometimes that a more plausible appearance might be put on things, the Union for instance: the fact that bishops were in favour of it would be an encouragement to the people to accept it. The unity between the Catholic Hierarchy and the laity may be seen in the Convention of the Catholic Committee of December 3rd, 1792. It is a complete answer to those who say that the bishops thwarted Ireland's chances of freedom. Here there was explicit affirmation of the policy that appealed to the Catholics for their admission

to the rights of the constitution. It was a policy that won through in its purpose, but it was one that censured in very express terms the Irish Parliament. In the event, it proved that the latter was much more hostile to Catholics than was the English Government. "It is, I think undoubtedly true," says Lecky, "that a wave of genuine alarm and opposition to concession at this time passed over a great part of Protestant Ireland." And Richard Burke said: "Every calumny which bigotry and civil war had engendered in former ages was studiously revived. . . . Every man, nearly in proportion to his connection with or dependence upon the Castle, expressed the most bitter, I may say bloody, animosities against the Catholics. This temper was nowhere discouraged." Even the Dissenters were "unquestionably very hostile to the Catholics." English Catholics had already got some relief at the hands of their Parliament. As a result of all these converging causes, it is not wonderful that the Irish Catholics as a body and as far as they were articulate, looked to England for redress. It is already seen elsewhere that no hopes could be placed in the Irish Parliament: it was a hothouse of bigotry. Edmund Burke says "the ascendants are as hot as fire." In these desperate straits who is to blame the Catholics if they looked elsewhere for relief, especially where they were sure to find it, as transpired from the Franchise Bill of 1793. In May, 1797, the United Irishmen insinuated that some of the bishops were in negotiation

with the British Government. Mr. Pelham was asked to deny this by Dr. Troy. This was a queering of the pitch on the part of the men who were about to enact the sad débâcle of 1798: they expected to make capital out of such a charge and as a consequence have their ranks swollen by misguided Catholics. The charge fell on deaf ears, but it is a pity it did not open the eyes of the country to the death-trap that was being prepared for it. Few insurrections there are that contain nothing only unmitigated evil; but it is difficult to say otherwise of the Rebellion of '98. Provoked by Castlereagh to help in the consummation of the contemplated Act of Union, it served the purpose sought, and cast dejection and fear over the whole country. It was a pity the bishops did not interfere in a more potent way to ward off that evil from the country.

Fearing a union between the Dissenters and the Catholics in Ireland, the British Government was favourably disposed towards the Catholics; while, too, under the influence of the Continental upheavals and the placating insistence of Burke, they saw that it was their best policy to give as much liberty to Catholics as would restrain them from violent and extreme measures. The home Parliament did not receive this with favour; and it is a thing that must never be forgotten that, while Charlemont and Flood and many others in opposition to the Irish Government were prepared to plead for a relaxation of the Penal Laws for Catholics, they would in no way subscribe to the giving of any political influence to

them. This point is often forgotten, and is responsible for much of the loose thinking which characterises the consideration of this question. With the exhibition of such harshness it is no wonder the ordinary people would say a plague upon your houses, and desire that another Sampson might appear at the feast of eloquence, and bitterness this time, and bring down the house upon them !

The atmosphere in which the tragedy of the Union was enacted must not be forgotten : there were wild and violent parties on all sides, a bitter Parliament, resentful against the Catholics ; mob law all through the country ; the army holding the ring in favour of the Orangemen ; fierce persecutions in Ulster out of which thousands of Catholics had to fly leaving behind them all their possessions. Add to all this the boisterous element let loose by the triumph of the principles of the French Revolution—principles of massacre and destruction around which played a frenzy of unreason and an orgy of desperate passion. There was no controlling factor of firmness to avert disaster in Ireland where the worst excesses might take place once the torch was applied to the inflammable material. The home Government was too partisan to have any control : it was, in actual fact, in league with the lowest elements of factionist bigotry against the majority. Little wonder if in this welter of confusion the lovers of justice and righteousness looked to a foreign power—and yet not more foreign than were the fomentors

of discord—to extricate the country from its embarrassments.

England's goodwill towards the Catholics was not a matter of mere words, it was backed up by promises, especially that of Catholic Emancipation. (It matters not now whether England was sincere or not: if you have no other way out in desperate circumstances you will trust to the person who makes professedly sincere promises, and who has already given them the impress of verisimilitude by friendliness. This was the attitude of England at this time.) Cornwallis, Castlereagh and Pitt seemed intent on a favourable deal at this time, and never was it more opportune, for nobody knew whither the country was drifting. Was the Republic to be established and the guillotine erected in a public place to chop off the heads, not of miscreants, but of the respectable class amongst the clergy and laity? All this was an actual question at the time we speak of. In such circumstances the enlightened policy would surely decide for the easy way out, that of acceptance of the friendly overtures. It was not a time when policies could be made: there was little to pick and choose from. Otherwise, how understand the appalling tyranny of the Penal Laws, and the servitude to which the bulk of the Catholics were reduced! It is easy in a different age, when freedom has undergone many evolutions, to think that other conceptions should apply and that other means might have been taken. There was little room for political strategy in those difficult times.

Let the dilemma be put then as it must have occurred to some at the time, for they were not devoid of all the good instincts of Irishmen. How, even at the risk of supporting a corrupt institution—the Irish Parliament—is it possible that men could sell themselves to the enemy and prove traitors to their country? This is a case of conscience that requires both refinement and art to solve. It may be easy to solve it to-day in the light of the historical events of a century, but in the days we are considering there was no other palliative except recourse to arms. That as an alternative was unthinkable after the sad venture of 1798, with all its hard and brutal measures of repression. Above all, Catholic bishops could not trust in such a policy; rather they were bound as an initiative to head elsewhere and try some other unexplored issues. In actual fact, the initiative for the Union was not of their making and, alternately, its support was not one of those things that would be considered striking had it been cast altogether on the other side—it would be characterised as very cold. Ireland was at the time “an extreme case of social pathology.” The leeches had already sucked its blood dry, it seemed time that some other remedy was administered *in extremis*.

CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION

OF all the iniquitous bills that have been passed through parliaments for Catholics, and for Irish Catholics in particular—and surely a collection

there has been that would rival the Draconian laws and the laws of the Medes and Persians!—none can compare with that which provided Catholic Emancipation. Its urging was the greatest of all tactical mistakes. The energy devoted to it and the hardships which it entailed would have won Repeal, while many would have escaped the obloquy that fell on them as individuals and as the associates of bodies during the long and desultory campaign that brought it about. The English Catholics were the only party that benefited by Emancipation, and it was the only means that could have relieved them from disabilities. As a body they were negligible and few in numbers; yet, by their self-assertion through agents and the ever-growing cultivation of diplomacy in Rome by the British Government and its influence in the councils of Europe as a power for order and stable politics, an exaggerated importance was given to their counsels, and they were sometimes capable of controlling the trend of decisions in purely Catholic matters not confined to their own country. But, for Ireland, Catholic Emancipation put back the clock, while it gave the British Government a character for righteousness and liberal-mindedness which it was not slow to parade in its later and more iniquitous dealings with Ireland. On the Continent, it could lay all the blame on Irishmen, intractable, as usual, to England's generosity and unresponsive to her good intentions. Without the forlorn excuse of Emancipation, it is questionable if the Union

could have been carried ; but, admitting that bribery would have done the deed, how much might have been avoided in the strife for the following twenty-nine years if the agitation had been for the Repeal of the Union ? Once the vampires that formed the Irish Parliament had been got rid of, through a surfeit of corruption and bribery, the way was clear for the establishment of a real Irish Parliament, the personnel of which could be secured through the Catholic Association.

For a hundred years the country has had to pay a heavy price for the blunder of Emancipation. It saw risings in which deluded youth, inspired by high motives, gave their lives for the perpetuation of an ideal ; famines, almost chronic, in which the nation became exhausted ; emigrations by which the flower of her sons and daughters took the road of exile to the bright land beyond, the legendary land of the brave and the free, but where nothing was got but what was earned with honest sweat. But it was always soothing to escape from the sight of England's red-coated garrison, the tunic of the Royal Irish Constabulary, and especially from the spies and traitors and time-servers abounding in the system which, like a net, tightened in and strangled liberty.

To say that Catholic Emancipation was an egregious mistake is a form of expression that will grate on many an ear. It will be argued that it brought a relief that was sorely needed. That is quite true, but the fact is that it did

not bring all the relief that was needed, and when one analyses the amount it did bring it melts away like the foam into nothing. It was a gesture rather on the part of England, but one which it could no longer refrain from making, without imperilling its rule in Ireland, while from the point of view of the labour of organisation and striving in Ireland to bring it about it was the famous *parturiunt montes et nascitur ridiculus mus*.

Dr. Milner said he would not purchase Emancipation by the slightest sacrifice of Catholic principle. An Irishman at that time should have said Emancipation shall not be purchased by the sacrifice of the slightest political principle. Emancipation never stirred the popular Catholic imagination in Ireland. It was a word of five syllables that would make very little impression amongst the people of that day unless the principle was adopted *omne ignotum pro magnifico*. The case of the Limerick farmer is given as explaining the matter thus : up to the present the labouring man gets fivepence a day, in the future he will get a shilling. It was the Catholic aristocracy seized on this word, concentrated on it and made it a policy. O'Connell by his training and upbringing was one to be attracted by it. Had Emancipation been avoided at this time the country might have been saved from useless recriminations and the venal politics to which the country has been treated for a century. The whole Vetoistic struggle, conducted with such ardour on both sides, and on the side of the aristocracy with more zeal than discrimination,

would not have appeared after the Union. The journeys to Rome, long statements and counter-statements, acrimonious controversy in Ireland and Rome brought what should have been but a mere episode into the limelight as a *cause célèbre* and diverted minds from the real issue which counted. It was well to scotch the Veto, but from the first overtures the scanty attention of the whispering of a serpent was what it deserved. Instead, it brought in its train a crisis of the greatest magnitude in which the dangers of schism were not remote, and that at the time when itinerant preachers of every shade of evangelical thought were tramping the country to spread their pestilential teaching so as to pervert the simple Catholics from the faith. Backed by huge sums of money and by influential societies that were fattening on the vitals of the country, those gossellers thought the time ripe to seduce the nation from its traditional religion. This huge attempt at perversion at this time points to an incoherency in the life of the country and a want of direction and co-ordination in its aims. The Union, which had been carried, and carried even with such notorious corruption, could not in itself account for this ignoble traffic carried on by the Bible Societies. The malignity of the campaign in Ireland had its counterpart in the questions asked before the Parliamentary Committee in London—there was a searching in questions of abstract doctrine, practices of faith and supposed abuses that would not have done credit to the intelligence of a Hottentot.

We might now see why Catholic Emancipation was granted ; and in the answer to that will be found Ireland's strong position at the time and how she might have pressed for something solid when she was content with a phantom.

The Duke of Wellington, under whose ministry Emancipation was granted, stated that the Act was passed "to avert civil war." This situation was all the more serious when the English were confronted in 1810 with a demand on the part of Protestants and Catholics in Ireland for a repeal of the Union, seeing that every day the country was becoming more impoverished. The Dublin Grand Jury, not a reactionary body, resolved that, "The Act of Union, after ten years' operation, instead of augmenting the comforts, prosperity and happiness of the people, agreeably to the hopes held out by the advocates of the measure, had produced an accumulation of distress ; and, instead of cementing, they feared that, if not repealed, it might endanger the connection between the sister islands." This discontent amongst the favoured class had naturally a much wider repercussion amongst the people and was augmented by the revived Catholic Association which was reaching all the corners of Ireland. Moreover, Protestants throughout the country were beginning to speak out, and in many places took an active part in promoting a strong organisation. The ferment had grown so much that in 1828 the Marquis of Anglesey could report that the police and soldiers were disaffected and were making common cause

with the people. They had been cheering O'Connell with the people wherever he appeared ; even a Welsh regiment which had only been a short time in the country was affected by the enthusiasm. Is it a matter of surprise, then, that Sir Robert Peel said that concessions " were not made without an intimate conviction of their absolute necessity in order to prevent greater dangers." Peel said further : " England . . . has had five-sixths of the infantry force of the United Kingdom occupied in maintaining the peace, and in police duties in Ireland. I consider the state of things which requires such an application of military force much worse than open rebellion." And Lord John Russell said with even greater emphasis : " Your oppressions have taught the Irish to hate your concessions, to brave you. You have inhibited to them how scanty was the stream of your bounty, how full the tribute of your fear." It was the strength of Ireland then that was determining the attitude of English ministers. Even the king at the last moment was prepared to withhold the measure if he could get other Ministers to carry on the Government, and that even with the likely risk of civil war. It is the old story which has been very often generalised : " England will never touch Ireland except under pressure of agitation ; she then finds something must be done ; she does the something in a hurry to get rid of the subject, and she finds that she has created more harm than she has cured." " The English people do not see that to remove even just grounds for

complaint is made useless by the form in which the concession is made. They never legislate beforehand with a desire to be just ; they wait for rebellion or danger of it, and then they yield without dignity and without deliberation. What they give is accepted without gratitude, and is regarded only as a victory won in the campaign which is being fought for the independence of Ireland . . . from the date of the Conquest we have neglected every duty which a ruling power owes to its subjects." So Froude, who cannot be suspected of sympathy towards Ireland, expresses himself.

These are the circumstances in which Emancipation was granted, but England was the victor in the trial of strength for, though she was compelled to give something, she made it useless by the form in which it was given and thus deceived the agitators. That such a powerful agitation as thrilled Ireland in those days could only produce a measure so circumscribed as Emancipation is too ridiculous for words. Catholic members were admitted to the Imperial Parliament, it is true ; but that would not be an unmixed good even at this hour of the day. A century's experience has opened the eyes of the nation on this matter, and there are many who would conclude that that was the greatest evil that ever befell Ireland. England was able to take the sons of Ireland into her Parliament and inoculate them with an Imperial outlook which, in its distractions, led them very often to forget the country they represented ; or they became

so mixed up with other parties that in their bargainings and strategies they became political tricksters throwing dust in the eyes of the people they represented. So it was with O'Connell: his position in the British Parliament nullified all the good which he had previously done in Ireland. It is true that he made great speeches, that he thundered and denounced, but of what avail: The gargantuan institution conquered him, quietly, but none the less effectually. He became a benign old gentleman in the course of time, very anxious to please everybody—rather a Whig in outlook and inclination, with a decided disposition to look for jobs for relatives and friends. And later he wondered why he had lost his grip on the country; but back to the country he had to go to revive the dying embers of his popularity. Representation in the Imperial Parliament was not then a great boon. But, besides that, what other practical results had Emancipation? They are looked for in vain. Here is how a certain historian sums it up when speaking of O'Connell: "The Catholic Church owed him much; the people less than nothing. No practical good, not even the smallest, ever came to the Irish peasant from this glorious Liberator. Emancipation and agitation might make the fortunes of patriotic orators, and make the Castle tremble before the Archbishops; but they drained no bogs, filled no hungry stomachs, or patched the rags in which the squalid millions were shivering; and still the potato multiplied, the people multiplied, and beggary multiplied

along with them. O'Connell cared no more for the poor than the harshest of Protestant absentees. The more millions that he could claim as behind him, the mightier he seemed." There is some truth in this summary, but mixed with error.

O'Connell must have known on the day after the granting of Catholic Emancipation when he addressed his letter, "First day of Freedom," that it was a freedom of theory, that the same spirit was to rule and the same administration to go on. Sir Robert Peel could say then "the source from which grace, mercy and favour flow is still to continue Protestant, exclusively and for ever." In the law court the cause of a Catholic was justly stigmatised thus, "it is not a verdict which is being deliberated upon, but a piece of vengeance which is meditated," "it was a cloak for vengeance, and, under the formalities of law skulked murderous violence." For a century after it did not prevent the law being administered by the few and in favour of the few; juries were packed, suspects were thrown into jail until they rotted there; Grand Juries had nothing in common with the people except to bring in bills against them and vote their money away, and Corporations were in the hands of Unionists. Emancipation did not entitle the farmer to give his daughter in wedlock to whom he liked, if the landlord so willed it. The landlord was free to condemn his tenants to ignorance or apostasy by refusing leave for the site of a church or a school, while the only

alternative given by some of them, under pain of eviction, was that the children on the estate should go to the Protestant school. These were the things that counted, and the benign influences of Emancipation did not extend to them.

One of the immediate effects of Catholic Emancipation was that the forty shilling freeholder was disfranchised. That is to say, the vast majority of the common people in Ireland were rendered innocuous politically by the great measure which was the Magna Charta of their freedom. Was there ever such a travesty of emancipation of the removal of disabilities! Chains were forged for the many that the few might get relief. These were the people who broke loose, notwithstanding all O'Connell's prating about constitutional means, in riot against the Tithe system, and carried the day. They were forced into secret societies now when they had no other means of giving expression to their views. This was true only of the more resolute amongst the people; the others lapsed temporarily into inaction and indifference. As a result, there was a decline of the spirit of patriotism.

With the loss of this spirit of patriotism went also the decline of Irish culture. A defence at home *pro oris et focis* would have kept the Celt in his natural *milieu* and the natural evolution of his social life would have gone on. But, with the representatives of the country in an English Parliament, there began an Anglicisation of them which contaminated the country. The Irish members were in an institution where they

were treated with studied indifference and contempt. Like shuttlecocks, they were made the sport of parties, mostly combining with Whigs but sometimes with Tories. Betrayed by all, they gave themselves the airs of makers of the Empire, and forgot poor Ireland in their misguided zeal.

The charge that they became Anglicised is not a hollow one. It was a necessity on account of the bargainings to which they had recourse: they were dragged at the tail of some one of the English parties; and when they stood severely in opposition—well, in their obstructionist methods they did not bring any particular credit on the country. All this reflected no benefit on the people at home; for, instead of cultivating self-reliance, they looked to England for everything. The centre of gravity of the country changed to Westminster, and the nation became necessarily Anglicised. The manners, customs, mode of thought of England were adopted, and there came into the political machinery in the course of time a corruption which could not serve Ireland. The system of selecting candidates for Parliament became ambiguous—even in O'Connell's time, it was tainted with nepotism; while later all individuality was destroyed, and this led to crimes, one of which centred around Parnell. The Anglicisation of the country led to the steady disappearance of the vital Irish industries. The country became so tainted in mind that nothing was favourably regarded except the ultra-smart and ultra-chic from beyond the sea. Everything produced at home

was looked upon as coarse and unfashionable, and not suited to the refinements of modern life. And so the country languished and decayed.

The Young Ireland party snatched the brand from the broken and faltering O'Connell in the nick of time, and the movement which they inspired shows by contrast the slough into which the country had drifted, notwithstanding the all-healing measure of Catholic Emancipation. The enemy could not be beaten by make-believe in his own arena; and it was only when that was realized, a century after and in those times, and when the political brokers were eliminated, that the true fire of the Celt got scope: then and only then in the memorable episodes of a few months, was freedom, which had been deferred for centuries, palpably advanced. The volcano smoked, and it was useless to feed it with sops: a hecatomb was necessary. It is well that the enervation of the Saxon dope had not so poisoned the body corporate, through the declension to venal politics, as to make it incapable of a heroic effort.

It is useless to speak of the might-have-beens of history; but it might with interest be asked what policy could be substituted for that of O'Connell? His policy is not open to blame, except in objective, until Catholic Emancipation was granted. That should never have been accepted or worked for; all the powers of Ireland should have been concentrated on Repeal. And O'Connell's power would have been vastly increased if there had been a union between that

vast incorruptible force that resisted the Union and his party. The body of Irish parliamentarians who voted against the Union believed that the Union was a nullity *ab initio*, and remained such. As a party, they were sincere, very Irish, and, what was still a better trait in them, they could not be bought. An alliance with such men was the obvious policy, and the determined aim of winning back the Parliament again, but a very different Parliament assuredly—for the Protestant boroughs had been suppressed and a compensation of £1,400,000 paid for them—one based on the power of the forty-shilling freeholders. While that was being won, all the concentration of organization and education should be confined to Ireland. That is, the policy of passive resistance, so successful in the Tithes dispute, and such a lever in our own time, was the one to be adopted. Davis had the best conception of Ireland's wants, and was very much in advance of his time in this regard—his policy of educating Irishmen, developing the resources of the country, and arousing a patriotism founded on his country's past greatness, was admirable and capable of building up the nation and making it irrefrangible. O'Connell taught the people nationality and manliness, but self-reliance was not in his programme in the way it occurred to Davis, and as it was understood afterwards as an incentive to work and combination. If passive resistance had been well conceived and rigorously put in practice for some years, with a studious ignoring of West-

minister, the English Government would be brought to terms and a sensible reduction effected in the term of waiting, which lasted more than a century, that freedom might be gained.

A century after, nothing looks more dry and barren than the Catholic Emancipation Act, or "An Act for the Relief of His Majesty's Roman Catholic Subjects," as it is called. More justly might it be called an Act for the Enslavement of His Majesty's Catholic Subjects, for it gave the right to enter an alien Parliament having duly taken an oath not "to disturb or weaken the Protestant Religion or Protestant Government in the United Kingdom," or the Protestant Succession; while, at the same time, the Act provided for the gradual suppression and final prohibition of Religious Orders of men, and forbade, under penalty of banishment for life, any person thereafter to become a member of such Orders. They who in a large part had helped to preserve the faith, and both risked and forfeited their lives in so doing, were to be sacrificed like the forty-shilling freeholders. It was all a great humiliation, and the gesture by which it was accepted was one of despair. An oath not "to disturb or weaken the Protestant Religion" could not quite easily fit in with the tenets of Catholic faith, for it was incumbent on the Catholic representative of a Catholic people to promote the Catholic cause; and it is hard to conceive now that that could be effected without somewhat of a diminution of Protestant aggres-

siveness which ultimately would weaken the Protestant Religion. In its least conception it was an oath that was very unsatisfactory from a Catholic point of view, and could only be swallowed with some misgivings by a member of that faith. It is certainly debatable to-day when such oaths have been brought into prominence.

THE LIBERATOR

THROUGH this epoch moved one man in particular whose voice resounded as a clarion-cry through Ireland, and its echo reverberated throughout Europe. He was an inspiration and a menace at the same time. This was Daniel O'Connell.

Books, papers, pamphlets, poems and legends mark his cycle. He embodies the essence of constructive work for all ground down nations and communities : he is the model of wise leadership amidst the many dangers of legal pitfalls. He was a great organizer and leader of men, the rôle of the demagogue was superlatively his, for he swelled and grew under its sway. In organizing he educated so that the country became cognisant of its strength, and took a conscious pride in its inheritance of nationhood. Under him the land became self-conscious of its duties, and woke up to the novel idea that it might have rights. Nationality he taught, and manliness, and it was through the effect of these that he was able to detach the forty-shilling

freeholders from the grasp of the landlord who drove them like sheep to the ballot-box. This must have been an arduous work and a great feat to have accomplished, for the servility into which the Irish peasant had descended for centuries had so debased him that he had acquired traits which were destructive of independence. The fulfilling of a promise, when doing so entailed such menaces to existence, as was the case in the early elections, where they showed independence, was a good test of the pitch to which O'Connell had tuned them. It was the backing which his forensic power brought him, especially as it grew legendary, that enabled the people to dare, for they felt that they had a power that was stronger than the law, and would outlive landlord rule to help them. The bully and the informer he exposed ruthlessly, and he showed that there was a legal escape from the noose which the law holds out. He was as resourceful as he was keen, and his power of invective was not circumscribed by niceties of restraint. He greatly dared, and it is most expressive of the man that his courage led him along paths that must have surprised even himself. But then his courage deserted him, his Talisman was lost, and he remained exposed but a mere man; and that was the unmaking of the cause he had espoused as well as the said prelude to closing scenes of sadness and lethargy.

It might be said of O'Connell that his instinct was better than his reason. Great as he was—and where are the great men without their

faults?—he was not immune from making blunders. He blundered in making Emancipation an end at a time when he had at his disposal the means of achieving Repeal. He blundered when he drank that Orange toast to the “glorious, pious, and immortal memory”—it was the poisoned cup which was proffered to another great man. In return for this conciliatory gesture, he received the Coercion Act of 1833, the most severe since the Union. Like other great men his power was in the mystery of his restraint, in the pent up force which he had at his disposal. But once he exposed this and appeared in the British Parliament, though his ability was great and he discoursed learnedly on sundry matters, there appeared too much of the windy verbal effort; oracular sway was lost and soon he had to complain of the lethargy of the country behind him.

His alliance with the Whigs was an experience full of barrenness, as it was for the Irish Party in later times. There is a parallel too between some of his agreements and those of the Nationalists. The Lichfield House bargain was of very little importance to the country which he represented, though he must sometimes have felt proud of his position as arbiter between the great English parties. It was a bad tactical move on his part to barter away his platform on Repeal in order to ingratiate himself with the English parties. He found even his dinner parties in Ireland proclaimed; but he had already gone too far in conciliating them, and the way

of retreat was not so easy. At the same time we must admire his courage once the deceit he had undergone had been borne in on him, for it was an acknowledgment of the treachery when he spoke of the "base, brutal, and bloody Whigs." (The alliterative character of the condemnation is only surpassed by its forcefulness.) The country was already growing tired of the parliamentary career of O'Connell, which in many ways was distinguished, but was not what the country wanted. In a highly developed State, and with prosperity guaranteed to it so that it was thriving and flourishing, the ways of O'Connell would be satisfactory, for they would bring *kudos* that would place it in the forefront of the nations. But that is not what Ireland wanted at this time : the people wanted deliverance from the ghoulish grasp of the landlords who were raising their rents, turning them adrift according as their leases expired (when a lease expired the land was given to the highest bidder without any regard for the reclamation and improvements effected by the occupying tenant) they wanted the abolition of Tithes ; above all, the common people wanted the status of human beings, not that of animals, to which they were accustomed. Between the needs of the country and the means employed to relieve them there was a ridiculous disparity. Dr. McHale had the courage to convey to the Tribune the disapproval which his alliance with the Whigs met with in Ireland. Fireworks in Westminster might be very delectable to a complaisant

mind, but behind him in Ireland the priests and people drifted into apathy. No longer were people on the tip-toe of expectation as they had been previously, when his word was a command through the country ; no longer could the interest of organization keep them together. They drifted, some into secret societies ; some felt there was no hope except in self-reliance and in a selfish existence. Belief was being lost in the leader's capacity, for, in present day jargon, he was not delivering the goods. O'Connell as a result, sulked and grew depressed : not uncertain signs were wanting to show that he had shot his bolt.

Grattan said " for a people to acquire liberty they must have a lofty conception of themselves." In teaching the people nationality and manliness, O'Connell forgot to teach them self-reliance—rather his point was that all reliance was to be put in him, even to a blind submission to his dictates, and an implicit belief in the prudence of his plan of operations. Institutions and organizations are maintained by the same means by which they have been created. The fiery enthusiasm of the demagogue created the organization which won Emancipation, but that could not be maintained by the conciliatory Tribune. The food of " lofty conceptions " was wanting when self-reliance was not there : something was wanting which would prevent the fire from going cold.

Consciously or unconsciously, O'Connell modelled himself on Grattan. He imbibed some of

his deep-seated prejudices, notably the catering for the propertied classes, and the desire to retain political power amongst them. Never ought he to have tolerated the withdrawal of the franchise from the forty-shilling freeholders. Into the fray he should have thrown himself on their behalf. It is in relation to them that he showed himself *magni nominis umbra*. The plausibilities of all his hustlings are outweighed by the gullibilities to which he subjected the people. How can the great clearances and consolidations of land which took place towards the end of his career, and a little while after, be explained except by the fact that his influence was nil or next to it in restraining the landlords? Talk of greatness to people who were being deprived of the means of livelihood on a vast scale! Between 1841 and 1847, 233,693 small holdings were broken up; and between 1847 and 1851, 86,246: that is to say, 319,939 in ten years. At a moderate estimate, it means that two millions and a half were deprived of the means of living. The first test of greatness ought to be found in protecting the downtrodden, and devising machinery for that purpose; but that was not to be found—"big noise" is no substitute for bread.

O'Connell ultimately lost confidence in the British Parliament and returned to rouse the country again. So well did he do it that he eclipsed his former sway, but it was crowds and oratory, oratory and crowds. He was too constitutional, as constitutional as the law itself.

Peel knew his man and had no fears. Even a more courageous policy in 1843 might have had a different issue. The Clontarf meeting should have been held, since it was not illegal to convene it. But when the Liberator held that rebellion is never lawful, and that human liberty is not worth the shedding of one drop of blood, there was nothing open to him but capitulation. And at this time the Cabinet in London was wavering; and a little while after 1848, a despatch had been sent from it to the Castle saying that Repeal could no longer be withheld without civil war. But O'Connell was then dead, and the Young Irelanders were a real menace. The Famine came and worked havoc in the country, but there was no directing voice to raise a bulwark against it, and no organization to cope with it.

The country was tottering to an abyss; the ravages of famine and lawlessness made it an unenviable spot. The history of that time is writ largely on the face of the world. Many fled from the famine in coffin ships, their bones mark a passage to other countries. Abroad, the survivors treasured the wrongs to which they had been subjected. At home, a different Ireland appeared, the national character became changed, self-respect was lost, recklessness and death appeared as one in the confusion of unavoidable conflicts. It is the answer to the question: "What was the permanency of O'Connell's work?"

Nevertheless, the Liberator was noble, generous and devoted to the cause he espoused. His legal

acumen stands unquestioned. As a Catholic and an Irishman, he embodied all the fine characteristics of the Celtic race, and his memory shall for ever remain enshrined in the hearts of a generous people. But his efficiency as a leader of the people and his public career must be judged by an objective standard—that is the essential part of history. Large opportunities presented themselves to him, the people backed him with unswerving support, he never rose to the summit of achievement, he frittered away the great weapon he had within his grasp. He led the people through a maze of desert, and did not descry the Promised Land.

The institutions reared by great men seldom outlive them for long. There is in the greatness much of the mushroom growth—much sponge and water. Notwithstanding O'Connell's efforts his work had frittered away before his death, and, when he was gone, Ireland saw more chaos and helplessness than it had experienced before. Expectancy had been roused amongst the people and an air of optimism prevailed throughout the land—massed meetings at Tara and elsewhere were clarion calls to the people for a final rally. It all fizzled out in the arrest of O'Connell and in the many humiliations consequent on it.

We are sensitive in Ireland about our heroes, mostly, no doubt, because much mud has been lashed at them by our enemies. Yet one hundred years after, in the cold light of history, impartiality ought to have reasonable sway. All the villains of the world are not as black as they

are sometimes painted. Just to take one at random—Machiavelli had many relieving features when judged by his age, and for a long time he was an industrious, honest, underpaid civil servant. So likewise the heroes of the world are not without their faults. Napoleon stands out as a great genius. That he had his faults and failings must be admitted, some think even to the point of being the greatest highwayman that ever lived. O'Connell has been compared to Constantine, Charlemagne, and a host of others. He had some of their characteristics, but he was human, and that means that he was liable to make mistakes. An error of judgment is not a serious accusation to make against a great man, and that is the burthen of the indictment to be made against O'Connell. He mistook Emancipation for Repeal: he bartered the sheet-anchor of liberty, which the forty-shilling freeholders enjoyed, for a phrase "Catholic Emancipation," the purport of which was not understood by the common people or by anybody else. Some thought it meant the lowering of the price of land, while others thought it implied increase of wages.

Prior to the granting of Emancipation, the British Government made the proposal: "Surrender the elective franchise, and we will grant you Emancipation." To this "J. K. L." answers: "Why address such language to the Catholics? When we ask for Emancipation, do we ask for a boon, or do we not seek for a further restoration of our natural and long-lost rights? Why speak

to us of trafficking our inheritance—of selling our birthright perhaps for a mess of pottage ? ” He understands the desire on the part of the Ascendancy and of the Orangemen to deprive the Catholics of this power. “ But if there be one measure more than another calculated to seal the doom of Ireland, to eradicate from her soil the very seeds of freedom, and to ensure for ever her degradation, that measure is, in my opinion, the disfranchisement of the forty-shilling freeholders ! ” Of the Irishman deprived of the franchise he says : “ He is now poor and oppressed, you then make him vile and contemptible ; he is now the image of a freeman, he will then be the very essence of a slave. . . . Like the Helot at Athens he may go to the Forum and gaze at the election, and then return to hew his wood or fetch his water to the freeman ; an inhabitant, but not a citizen, of the country which gave him birth.” If the franchise has an ennobling influence it is a power also—“ It is a power at present only in its bud ; every friend of civil liberty should shield it from the blast which might now destroy it ; he should protect it with all his might, as the very palladium of Irish rights. . . . I should rather suffer injustice and wrong than be the dupe of any man ; the former might be inflicted on me by force, but to the latter I would myself become a party ; and a feeling of wounded pride at being overreached by my adversary would be the most bitter ingredient in the cup of my affliction. No ! I would expect that if it were proposed to

the Catholics to barter the elective franchise for emancipation, they would indignantly reject the unworthy compromise." This is what was bartered in 1829 when Catholic Emancipation was achieved, though O'Connell knew well that the franchise, as he had said, "is the first step towards not being exactly slaves." He knew that the tenant was "courted" by the landlord because of his vote, and still, as a condition of Emancipation, he was prepared to barter away that which saved them from being slaves.

In his evidence before the Select Committees of the Lords and Commons he poses very much as a detached and impartial spectator of conditions and events in Ireland. He said: "I have never attributed the disturbances of Ireland merely to the want of Emancipation." It stood out clearly that the poverty of the people was the matter which required immediate need, and there was no hope of that being palliated unless by Repeal—the great Famine was afterwards a signal proof of that. It little availed Ireland to find O'Connell during the sittings of the Select Committees bartering the very principle from which any hope of liberation could come. A "charter of Emancipation" could have been got in 1810 if the effective Veto had been assented to, which would be a betrayal of principle. Was there not a betrayal of a principle of equal utility when the forty-shilling freeholders were abandoned in 1829?

Thus O'Connell was, almost in his own despite, a great destroyer. It would be unfair to say

that he lost his balance in the benign atmosphere of Westminster. It was all a wild game of blind-man's-buff with him, and he played heartily, hoping that luck would favour the issue. As was said of another great man, Carlyle, he "led men into the wilderness and left them there." If Emancipation were to mean anything it should mean that slaves were to be liberated. Freedom is of no utility without the franchise and is, indeed, inconceivable without it. Franchise and Emancipation are in the eyes of all who understand freedom convertible terms. "*I would expect,*" said J. K. L., "*that if it were proposed to the Catholics to barter the elective franchise for Emancipation, they would indignantly reject the unworthy compromise.*"

CONCLUSION BY CONTRAST

TO-DAY the scientific student of comparative politics and policies has a right to compare and criticise movements, and to adduce the effects of relative modes of procedure. It is true that this may be open to the objection that such comparisons are mainly founded on guessing and that history is falsified. As for the comparisons being founded on "might have beens," and thus largely guess work: that is a fair criticism, but the general trend of various policies can be judged with limited effect in the relation of comparisons based on one hundred years of history. History is a continuous piece; it has

its warp and woof of events, but there are no omissions from it, since it seizes on all the threads of the various aspects of life and pursues them to their natural sequences. Picking up, then, all these tendencies, the inevitable failure appears of all constitutional and conciliatory measures. To be satisfied with the constitutionalism of Irish action during the nineteenth century is to be satisfied with very little. The return to the physical force policy—returning rhythmically as it did from inspirations that are not very obvious at first sight; quite the contrary—has been a decisive element, though its expression was not always reduced to the concrete condition of rebellion or war. Physical force always held the more ardent patriots under its spell; it kept alive the spirit of the Nation, and it finally bore fruit which most people considered impossible. Such things might have been necessary in the filling in of the evolution of events, but the big things that counted, the settling of the Tithe's question, the different agrarian questions, and the last final dash for freedom were all achieved by the physical force men. The cowardly policy was the policy of deceit, even when it appeared to be successful; it was the policy of failure, while the strong action eventually proved a success in keeping up hope, in maintaining morale, or in achieving the end. There was brought about such a condition of things that England did really capitulate—there is plenty of room still for discussing how far such an opportunity was availed of.

The element of talk in O'Connell's movement was its weakest point, except where the talk was rashness, and then it was the concentrated physical force behind it that carried the day. Wellington and all concerned had no hesitation in attributing the granting of Catholic Emancipation to the fear which organization in Ireland inspired—Wellington, indeed, said : “ It is quite clear that the organization of the disaffected in Ireland is more perfect than ever.” Either England misinterpreted the movement or O'Connell denied all his peace principles, for it was taken for granted that he could not curb the forces which he had let loose. From the cave of Aeolus he had summoned spirits which he could not subdue. The force then at his disposal, and the very backbone of his success, was an army, even if it had not sufficient military equipment. Military tackle in that day was simple : the pike was easily forged, and could achieve a great deal, especially when numbers were large and skilfully manœuvred, for there were hopes of taking from a routed enemy the sinews of war. The Wexford tactics of 1798 had demonstrated that a trained army was vulnerable, and that skill in handling poorly armed volunteers was a fruitful source of acquiring weapons and ammunition.

If Catholic Emancipation had been all that some claim for it, the battle was won long ago ; and the softening spirit of constitutional agitation ought to have achieved the rest. The mollifying spirit of Westminster undoubtedly produced

imperiallly-minded patriots, almost lost to Irish interests, but the disenchantment that was found later in that policy does not need to be stressed. So many years of turmoil and unrest followed, yet each succeeding generation was given the sacred deposit of national independence to guard and vindicate through evolutions and changing incidents that were tantalizing in their frequency. The weakening of the moral fibre in the country in the years immediately following Emancipation was the most deplorable effect of the Act. By some, it was looked on as an end, and not as a stage, in the struggle for liberty which was expected to be achieved automatically by parliamentary representation. It is here the chief delusion arose and one which overshadowed the many fateful years that intervened until the Great War. The better educated class of the people, and those especially who had social pretensions, were now prepared to accept the Union, and to put themselves under the tutelage and power of England. A little more might have brought about the complete enervation of the race. At the outbreak of the Great War, recruiting stations were besieged by members of the class mentioned so that they might have Continental graves for the glory of England. The first gleam of hope for the making of a sturdier race only came in 1916 when the Rebellion showed the way to another emancipation.

But how can the glamour, which, rightly or wrongly, hung about the Emancipation Act for so long be explained away? Stereotyped and

mechanical thought tries to bring results under the heading of some generalisation. Especially is that tendency present amongst a simple-minded people, such as were the Irish who had passed through the nightmare of the Penal Laws : they saw in the aurora the broad noonday of relief and independence. The fall of the Bastille in Paris has ever remained the symbol of the conquest of tyranny achieved by the French Revolution. Still it is only a symbol, for the Bastille stood undefended ; and history has proved that its supposed conquest was still more inglorious, for it was accomplished, not by the patrons of Liberty, but by the criminal class that frequented the suburbs of the city, and who had good reason to be interested in its demolition. When the mind turns now from prospect to retrospect and adds up the achievements, it cannot be satisfied with symbols but adds up the hard facts, though it may have a sympathy with the spirit that in prospect hails dubious reliefs with the hope eternal. Even in delusion, that hope is a happy gift since it supplies the longing and effort that are necessary for achievement. When pessimism overshadows all else the pangs of hope cease, ardour runs out, all experience becomes a disenchantment, visions are not seen by the young, and the pall of melancholy hangs over ebbing life. To the young this is a derisory state, and so they take up the burthen again. And so it was once the magic spell of the word Emancipation had run its course, Young Ireland had again to quicken

its spirit, and succeeded in saving a brand from the dying embers. The choice had to be made between hope and despair, and it is not perpetuated in the Celtic character to submit to the cynicism of defeat for too long.

The contrast, if established, between what was granted to the Catholics before Emancipation and after is illuminating. Here are a few of the items : In 1778 Catholics were allowed to hold landed property on a lease of 999 years, whereas previously they could hold it only for 35 years, though paying two-thirds of the full annual value. In 1782, with the permission of the Protestant bishops, Catholics were free to open schools, by 1792 the placet of the Protestant bishop was not necessary. Limerick and Galway had ceased to be interdicted areas for Catholics : while the bar was opened to them in 1792 and 1793, though they may not aspire to be king's counsels. Likewise, the elective franchise was conferred ; the magistracy, Grand Juries, municipal corporations, and Trinity College were open to them, and they might hold commissions in the army up to the rank of general.

No such progress was marked after the advent of Catholic Emancipation. Rather, it started by putting many in a position of inferiority. The Act carried in its wake the disfranchisement of the forty-shilling freeholders. As already seen, this should never have been tolerated, for it was suicidal to the sturdy men who had emancipated themselves from the serfdom of landlordism: they were cast back again into slavery and worse.

The necessary consequence of this disfranchisement was the clearance of these holders from the estates. Their utility to their masters had ceased when they were deprived of their votes; and so two millions and a half of the population were out of work and stricken with distress by 1836. From the County of Tipperary 20,000 were cleared in five years, and then was experienced there the horrors of great want, a thing sufficiently endemic in the country already. The price of Catholic Emancipation was already being paid.

It is not necessary to stress the Law of Charitable Bequests as it operated for years after the passing of Catholic Emancipation in this Catholic country. One would expect that what laid claim to the emancipatory spirit should bring a solace to Catholics in the operation of charitable trusts. Still, up to the year 1843—that is fourteen years after the achievement of Catholic Emancipation—"no person could give or grant any land or sum of money, to or for the support of any Catholic establishment." Even under the new law introduced in 1843, the trusts were administered by a Board that had a Protestant majority, while these Commissioners who formed the Board were allowed considerable discretion and latitude in their adjudications regarding the disposition of properties involved in the trusts. It is, moreover, a part of the common knowledge how for mere technicalities, irrespective of the last will and testament of the testator, donations for Masses were voided, and turned to other

uses than those intended by the donor. Thus, neither in life nor in death, were Catholics emancipated from laws made by their alien rulers.

There can be no emancipation while the mind is enslaved ; and that was the educational condition of the native youth of Ireland during the whole of the nineteenth century. Education did not profit much by Catholic Emancipation. Previous to it, Catholics had a right to erect schools, and there was not much interference with the class of education that was given. But the compromise effected when the National Schools were established gave the Government full sway over the young mind, an advantage which it used to its interest for many a long year. This education was the expression of the conqueror's determination to rule the Irish people, and to impose on them an alien culture. As helots, national thought and aspiration was forbidden them, and a grossly materialistic conception of life was imposed in those Celtic minds, so full by nature of the imaginative and the idealistic. Education, far from being the expression of the social, religious and political aims of the people, as it ought to be, treated the religion of the majority by default as a low class creed, while those who belonged to it were looked on as socially unfit ; for the atmosphere, the current thought, the dominating ideas of life, all these are stimuli in the educational process : so that in the Ireland of the nineteenth century a Catholic child had brought before it

the inferiority complex under which it laboured. Whately was forceful enough to dominate Irish education for several years : Ireland was treated as an English Shire, and it was the object of the whole system to try and warp the young minds by suppressing anything that would appeal to the imagination where the religion or love of country was concerned. Continuity, association, adaptibility, atmosphere in a word, all these things necessary for efficient education were spurned, while a corrosive intellectual poison was injected to foster young minds into alien ways. "This most petrified and soul-killing of all systems," Dr. Starkie called it. Yet, as late as 1907, the very same spirit pervaded the National Board. Then was condemned and suppressed a reader which included some account of our national heroes—neither overdrawn, nor strongly drawn—and treated of associations that were part and parcel of the national life. Fortunately, by a sort of bardic tradition, there was preserved, under difficulties, another tradition that did honour to the continuity of the Celtic spirit. By law this was non-existent, and everything was done to keep it in its limbo of lost causes by the body that ruled the destinies of the country.

That the driving force which brought about the Act of Catholic Emancipation could have achieved more may be inferred from the Marquis of Anglesey's words, spoken two years after Emancipation was granted: "It is idle and absurd to shut your eyes to the degrading fact. We have positively nothing to look to but the

army." Why this ferment if the nation saw in Emancipation all that some have read into it since that day? Lecky describes the Irish administration four years after Emancipation, and what was true then was almost true at the end of the century:

"In 1833—four years after Catholic Emancipation—there was not in Ireland a single Catholic judge or stipendary magistrate. All the high sheriffs with one exception, the overwhelming majority of the unpaid magistrates and of the grand jurors, the five inspectors-general, and the 32 sub-inspectors of police were Protestant. The chief towns were in the hands of narrow, corrupt, and, for the most part, intensely bigoted corporations. Even in a Whig government, not a single Irishman had a seat in the Cabinet, and the Irish Secretary was Mr. Stanley, whose imperious manners and unbridled temper had made him intensely hated. For many years promotion had been steadily withheld from those who advocated Catholic Emancipation, and the majority of the people thus found their bitterest enemies in the foremost places."

The Government was not unwilling to use dope and eye-wash—which would appear to be the strategy inherent in Emancipation—so as to make Catholics feel that high office was within their reach. Here are Peel's words, "occasional favour shown to a Roman Catholic will be very advantageous, and diminish the influence and power of those who are hostile to the British connection." This sympathetic tendency did

not prevent a great scandal being caused when O'Connell—or as the *Times* put it, “the rancorous and foul-mouthed ruffian O'Connell”—was invited to dine at the Vice-Regal Lodge. The responsible minister had to answer for it, to the King, Lords and Commons.

Statistics are eloquent in showing the slowness employed in appointing Catholics to office throughout the nineteenth century. They were studiously kept out of honorific and remunerative positions to which their abilities entitled them. They were an ostracised class and rarely accepted for position, unless they had previously given proof that they had renounced all national aspirations. Unfortunately, it too often happened that “tame” Catholics detached themselves from the people and, to prove that their conversion was sincere, rounded boldly, if not spitefully, on their fellow-countrymen, so that they were a greater object of aversion to them than were the Protestants whose natural and traditional duty it was to coerce the mere Irish. The slavery and degradation of that period wherein Catholics were eligible but virtually excluded from office compares very unfavourably with the pre-Emancipation period. Even the Statute Book is eloquent of the times. From 1833 forward, it showered Coercion Acts and Crimes' Acts until Mr. Arthur Balfour's “Perpetual Crimes Act” showed that they had come to stay. An unamiable atmosphere existed for Catholics during all this period. It was the hand-to-hand struggle between antagonistic

forces ; but on the Irish side, during the fray, the will to be free was not broken, but diminished.

Catholic Emancipation was a slogan, embodying a grand ideal which was never realised, through no fault of the common people of Ireland. As things fell out after the passing of the Act which embodied it, especially in its detrimental effects on the national movement by its eclipsing the end in view, which was Repeal, it is hard either historically or ethically to appraise it.

AND WHAT THEN ?

“THERE is profit for the spirit in such contrasts as this ; criticism serves the cause of perfection by establishing them. By eluding sterile conflict, by refusing to remain in the sphere where alone narrow and relative conceptions have any worth and validity, criticism may diminish its momentary importance, but only in this way has it a chance of gaining admittance for those wider and more perfect conceptions to which all its duty is really owed.” So spoke Matthew Arnold. It is quite relevant here ; for those who are satisfied with inadequate ideas may find in the Act of Catholic Emancipation some solace, but a nation must ambition adequate ideas and leave aside the paltry satisfaction of make-belief.

The moral factor resulting from Emancipation, that is the impression which the notion of some

relief, small and threadbare as it was, produced upon the people, has a right to be considered. It is quite a matter which falls under a constructive historical survey ; for the psychological trend of events, as well as their effect, is the atmosphere in which things run their course, and therefore cannot be neglected without taking from the picture. O'Connell's oratory and the enthusiasm which the Catholic Association aroused, especially in bringing it home to remote places in the country through the "Catholic rent," created a ferment which was replete with great anticipations. The people were hypnotised into thinking that some achievements would result from their effort. The Clare election, the assertiveness of O'Connell, which was tantamount to a defiance in the very headquarters of the enemy, the British Parliament, when he refused the oath by saying : " I see here one assertion as to a matter of fact which I know to be untrue : I see a second as to a matter of opinion which I believe to be untrue. I therefore refuse to take this oath "—all this threw a deserved glamour, not incomparable with achievements in the heroic cycles, over the event of Emancipation which appealed to a highly imaginative people. And the final rally of re-election in Clare brought enthusiasm and curiosity to a higher pitch still.

Nothing succeeds better than success ; but so great was the whirlwind of enthusiasm that the contents of the success were not examined ; the people were not in a mood for considering,

they preferred to promote their self-deceit rather than analyse the boon derived which was of the nature of Dead Sea fruit. The psycho-analyst need not be called in to diagnose this state of mind by reason of which phantoms pass as realities, and dreams as achievements that might be more properly classed as nightmares. It is a form of vanity common alike to individuals and nations. Moreover, public opinion can be doped so as to feel and think that great events have resulted from its own concerted action.

The following picture of Ireland immediately preceding Emancipation is not overdrawn : there was the central association in Dublin labouring to concentrate the interest of the country in what was dear to its heart, relief from oppressing religious disabilities ; there were the meetings throughout the country focussing local attention on the necessity of effort ; there were the pamphlets and leaflets that spoke of the day of relief being at hand ; there was the unrest created by all this amounting to a tip-toe of expectation. The time too was opportune, as the political situation was none too stable in England. At length, something did occur—Emancipation was voted ! An overwrought and weary people were not in a mood to analyse their gains. It was all very human, for no one bent on achieving great things is prepared to acknowledge defeat, and that Pandoras box, supposed to contain wonders, was empty, nought but the gift of hope remaining to encourage self-deception. The leaders were not prepared to

admit defeat either, and so the legend began and prospered. Rigby had rightly said in his pamphlet long before, in 1808, that Emancipation might be given, for it would be "an almost empty privilege." And so it has been proved even to the letter. O'Connell may have foreseen this, for did he not say? "Hereafter nobody will give me due credit for winning Catholic Emancipation, for it will never enter into their hearts to conceive out of what a race of slaves I have made men." So the physical force men understood the accomplishments of parliamentarians at all times, so had they too when they took the field against O'Connell. The hoax of conciliation has been always one-sided, but there shall always remain men for whom words, no matter how frothy, shall be realities. The ensuing Famine played into the hands of the physical force party, and out of that movement there arose an emancipation far greater than what had been achieved in 1829, for it was an emancipation of mind through a conception of a new national outlook in which shone, through literature, epic, song, music, a new Ireland that was worthy of great deeds—this was the stepping-stone between 1798 and 1916, but it possibly outclassed the latter in ambition, though not in achievement.

The legend of Emancipation is still about : it has survived as a good hoax. Mentally, many considered themselves emancipated, and for a century others were made to believe by compulsion that they were actually so, to such a

depth had the poison of Anglicization and the magic of suggestion brought them. But with history taught on un-Catholic lines, with ideas subservient even yet to the Protestant atmosphere, with legal disabilities still unrevoked, with the devouring fire of souperism still raging, there cannot be Emancipation in a Catholic country. If these ideas were grasped, the chains might be sundered; but, if Emancipation is taken for granted, they never shall be, for the soothing words "Catholic Emancipation"—supposed to be a century old, and therefore of decent lineage—will be bandied about; they will then resound in the public ear and all will go to sleep in their chains firmly riveted. This centenary may be made to serve as the occasion for bringing about Catholic Emancipation as real as it is needed. To that end the best thing that can be done in celebration of such an inauguration is to erect a monument, not necessarily a material one, to pledge the Nation to a truly Catholic conception of life which will live in its manners, customs, laws, literature and history, to see to it that this is respected; and to make the aggressors of our Faith understand that their liberty in this land is hypothetical to fair play and fair dealing, for there is no security where the ravages of an ignoble proselytism besmirch public endeavour. Aman will be the ruler as long as Mardocai is content to sit at the gate: slaves will be in bondage until they begin to recognise the inconvenience of their chains. In this content it is relevant

to remember that the Act by which Penal Laws were lately abrogated in England and Scotland was not allowed to apply to Northern Ireland. The minority at the other side of the Border are helots, at this side they want to be rulers !

To erect a monument to what is not seems insensate : to erect a monument of public opinion that, awakened, will take the steps to bring about the much-desired emancipation would be an event worthy of a century of effort. The days of sonorous phrases are gone—it is the day of the machine and realization : a phrase cannot any longer make a man, though it may easily be his undoing.

To the Second Spring Ireland must look forward now, and not to a harvest to be garnered from boughs that have been grafted on to the stock of an alien civilization. If the Irish race is now to grow and develop, it is not by merely patching up the extraneous elements that have entered into its life, or in seeking in the make-shifts, which entered into its life when in the durance vile of servitude, remedies of progress and expansion, but in cutting short the exotic life which it perforce has drifted into, and again taking up the mission which was its own when cut short by English aggression seven centuries ago. It must stand on its own feet, develop its own life and culture “as though the whole hideous tragedy of the intervening ages were but the nightmare of an uneasy sleeper.” The same hopes and ideals may still encourage her, for she must not admit physical, intellectual, or

moral degeneracy. A nation that was able to survive so many ordeals, and show such freshness and physical fitness, as she has shown in modern times, has yet a long way to go. A reversion to Celtic ideals, and to the life of our forbears in language, literature, history, song, music, and the arts is alone the means to bring about the reinvigoration which is so much desired by the present generation. Surely, the days of patching up our wrongs went by with direct English rule, the men of to-day will not be content with the crumbs of nationality ; it remains to remake the life of the Nation on Irish and Catholic lines.



Donation

